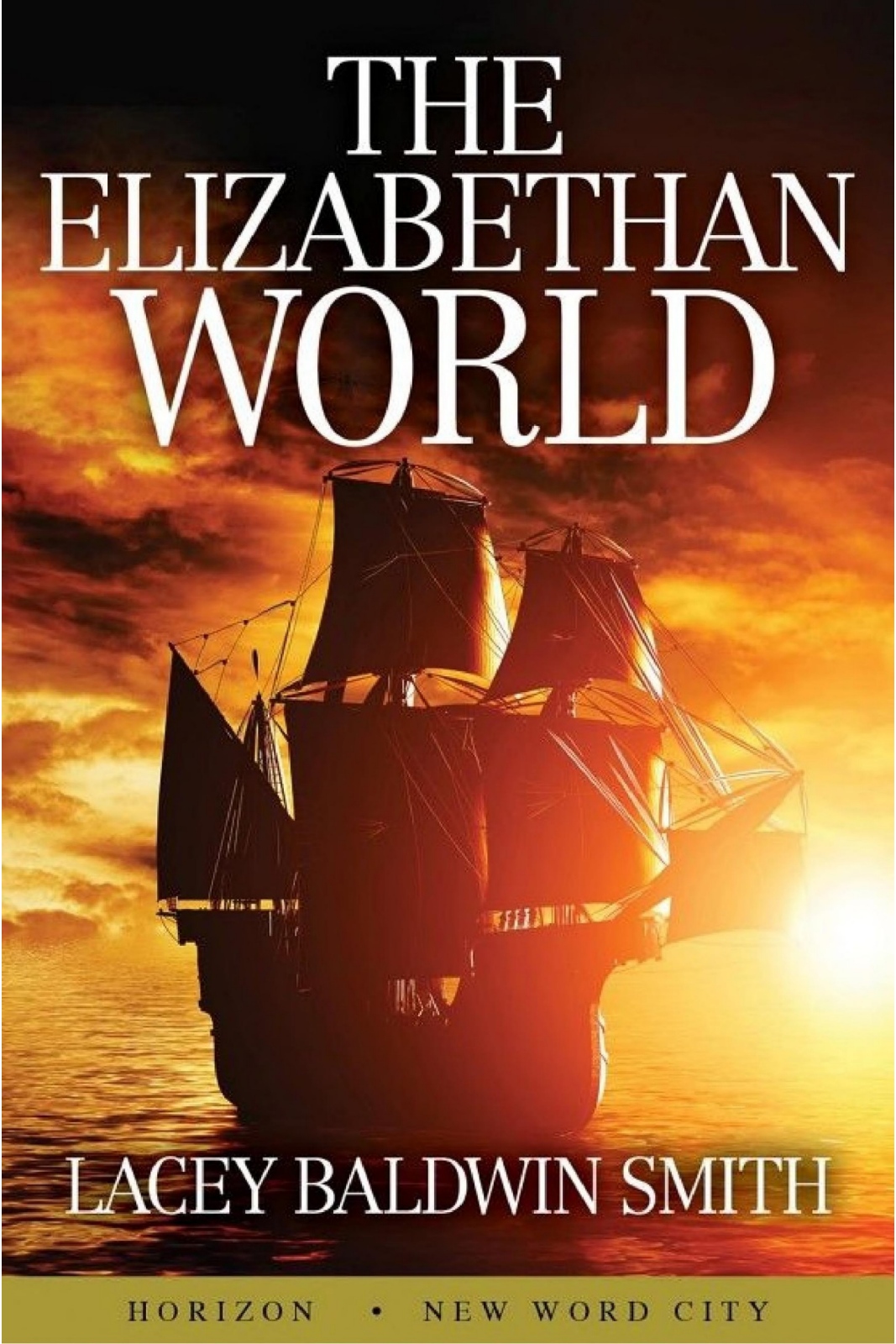
THE ELIZABETHAN WORLD



LACEY BALDWIN SMITH

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VISIT...

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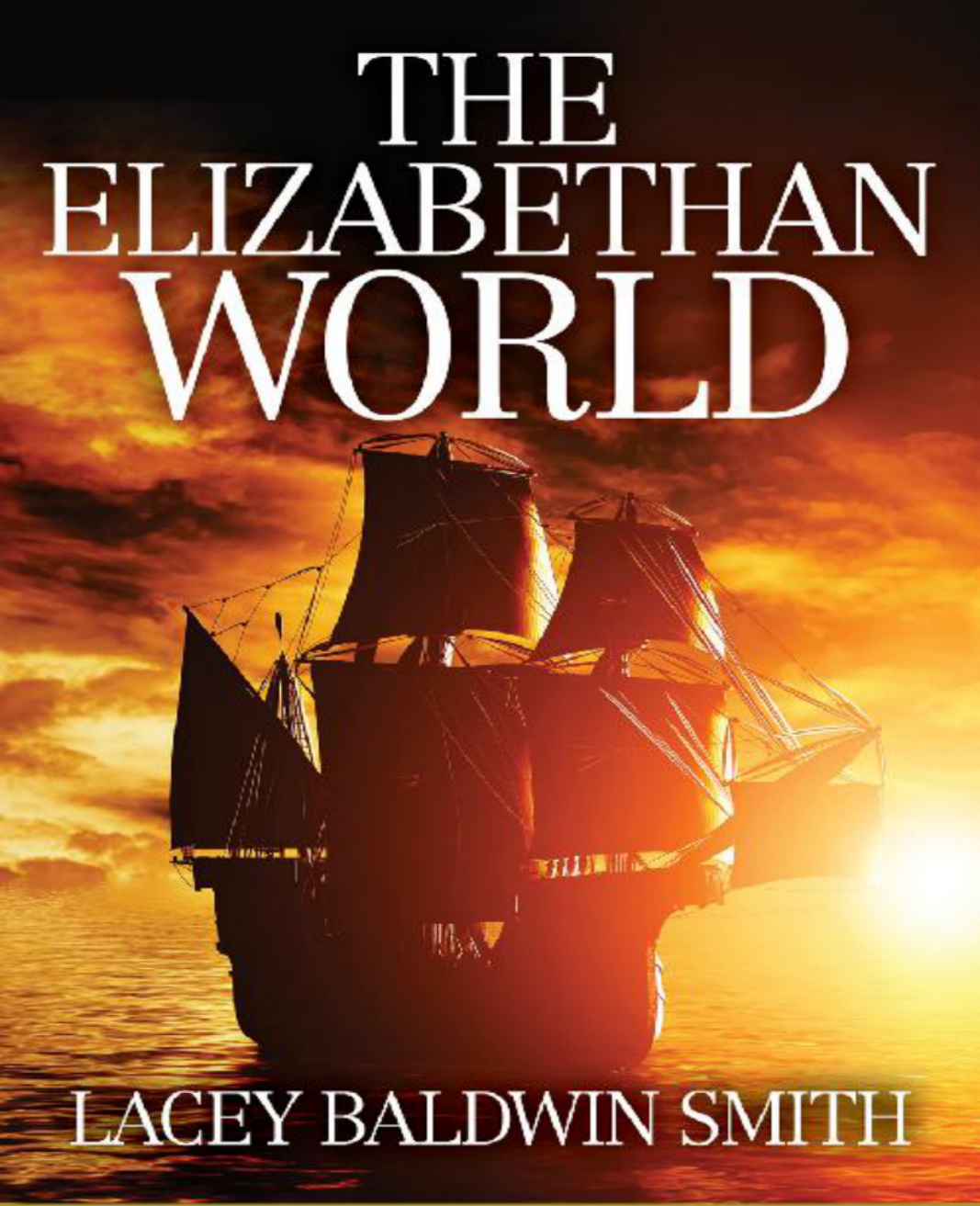

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I

THE OLD ORDER PASSES

"I appeal," said Charles VII of France, "to the sharp end of my sword." As the medieval world slowly dissolved in the fifteenth century, Europe fell prey to barbarism, sacrilege, and selfishness, in which people's inhumanity knew no limits and all men made appeal to the sharp ends of their swords. Change and the shock of catastrophe generated despair and foreboding, inducing individuals to forsake and pervert the old standards. In poetry and art, in sermons and chronicles, in actions and even in aspirations, a tone of despondency prevailed. As early as the fourteenth century, the French poet Eustache Deschamps set the tone for most of late medieval Europe when he sadly asked:

Why is our life so cruel and dark

That men no longer speak to friend?

Why does evil so clearly mark

The monstrous government of men?

Compare what is with what is past

And see how fraud and sorrow stand,

While law and justice fade so fast

That I know no longer where I am.

Compared with the preceding centuries, the fifteenth century presented a tableau of royal murders, clerical corruption, international anarchy, and spiritual neurosis. Traditionally the medieval ideal had been one of universalism, which in practice had been balanced by diversity. Christendom was seen as a seamless cloak, a single corps in which the universal Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire shared the two swords of Christ - the spiritual and temporal.

Religious unity had at one time been a reality, but political union had never been more than a myth. By 1400, medieval Christianity was falling apart. The Holy Roman Empire was a specter in which real power rested not with the emperor but with a myriad of principalities scattered throughout Germany, the Lowlands, and northern Italy. Each prince, prelate, and imperial town possessed sovereignty within the empire, and the emperor was little more than a figurehead. The empire

itself was an artificial relic, held together by hollow pomp and gaudy circumstance.

Spiritually the Christian world was also in chaos. Religious unity had disintegrated; now Europe witnessed rival popes, one at Avignon, the other in Rome, each claiming keys to the kingdom of heaven and thundering maledictions at any Christian who challenged his authority. The Great Schism lasted thirty-nine years, from 1378 to 1417. Significantly Europe divided along national lines: England and Germany sided with Urban VI in Rome, and France and Scotland followed Clement VII at Avignon - a sign that the medieval ideal of universality was giving way to international anarchy.

Medieval institutions survived, but the spirit that had sustained them withered and died. Kings continued to rule, but subjects complained that "the law serveth for naught else but to do wrong"; the chivalric creed persisted, but the feudal knight became a military anachronism; the cleric retained his privileged position in society, but his flock learned to use such expressions as "fat as a canon," "lazy as a monk," and "lewd as a Carmelite." In crown, baronage, and Church, the fifteenth century experienced a failure of leadership.

The dynasties of Europe were afflicted with incompetency and insanity and stricken by sudden death. The medieval concept of kingship had incorporated three ideals: piety, justice, and courage. The king was supposed to be the fountain of justice and the model of faith and bravery. He lived on his own, using his private wealth to sustain his regal office. He ruled by law, defending and recognizing the rights of his subjects, dedicated to the defense of the Holy Church, championing the true faith against the infidel. Such a king had been Louis IX of France in the thirteenth century, and both Church and state agreed that he deserved the name of saint.

Kingly reality in the fifteenth century was far different from the ideal exemplified by Saint Louis. In France, the realm fell prey to internal discord, foreign invasion, and governmental paralysis. When Charles V died in 1380, the crown passed to a twelve-year-old minor, Charles VI, who moved from adolescence into insanity. From the moment Charles took control of the government, he proved to be a monarch of inordinate passion: immoderate in work, generosity, war, and pleasure. Court expenses rose from 94,000 livres each year

to 450,000 livres, and during the periods of his madness, officially termed the king's absences, the land was torn by bitter rivalry between the princely houses of Burgundy and Orleans. For fifty years France bled; neither "the fear of God, nor love of our neighbors, nor anything else," as a contemporary witness said, was sufficient to restrain Frenchmen from "doing violence to one another."

The lunatic king and the quarreling nobility offered England the chance to regain its lost province of Normandy and to initiate a second bout of the Hundred Years War. The war was a horror story punctuated with atrocities, guerrilla tactics, and broken promises, both sides fighting to the point of total exhaustion. The little village of Neville-sur-Saône was sacked six times in three years by the mercenary troops of each side. By the end of the war, the population of the diocese of Rouen had fallen from 15,000 to 6,000.

France finally cast out the Goddamns, as the English were called, but its success had less to do with royal leadership than with the mounting weakness of its enemy, for England was handicapped in 1422 by the succession of Henry VI, a nine-month-old sovereign who ruled off and on for the next fifty years with varying degrees of pious incompetence. The fifteenth century in England was little better than in France. Since 1399, when Richard II, the last of the direct Plantagenet kings, had been deposed by his cousin, Henry, the Duke of Lancaster, the kingdom had suffered disputed succession. Feuding among the great magnates was momentarily set aside when the new king, Henry V, led his barons to victory at Agincourt in 1415. But he died in 1422, leaving an infant son to the tender mercies of avaricious relatives, and when the tide of victory in France had ebbed, England fell prey to party discord and civil war.

Defeat in France was the signal for strife to begin at home, for, as one French commentator put it: "Upon their return into England not one of the English lords thought of lessening his estate; and the whole revenue of the kingdom was not sufficient to satisfy them all." The Wars of the Roses between the house of Lancaster, with its red rose, and the House of York, with its white, lasted by one computation until 1471 when Edward, the Duke of York, finally made good his claim to the throne and ruled as Edward IV. By another reckoning, the wars endured until 1485 when Yorkist Richard III fell at

Bosworth field and Henry Tudor, the grandfather of Queen Elizabeth, seized the crown - according to one legend, he snatched it from a thorn bush on which Richard had hung it.

The paralysis of regal leadership throughout Europe was no more vividly revealed than when the Holy Roman Emperor Wenceslas and Charles VI of France met in an effort to heal the religious schism of Christendom. The meeting, in 1398, had to be conducted by underlings since the emperor was too drunk, and Charles was too mad to confer. The conference did nothing but magnify Europe's woes; instead of ending schism, it called for the election of a third pope to settle the controversy. In 1400, Wenceslas was deposed; he had shocked even his hardened peers by roasting his cook on a spit when that unfortunate servant spoiled his dinner. But he refused to abdicate, and for ten years thereafter the German empire was torn by disputed elections until eventually there were three warring emperors, roughly corresponding to the three rival popes.

Elsewhere in Europe, royal dynasties were cursed by similar madness and violence. The epithets given to the kings of Castile are evidence of the brutality, injustice, poverty, and weakness that plagued the Iberian Peninsula. There was Peter the Cruel, Henry the Invalid, and Henry the Impotent, more aptly called the Degenerate. Castile, like England and the empire, suffered the prolonged rule of a well-meaning but ineffectual monarch, John II, who announced at the close of a reign of forty-eight years that he would have been happier had he been born the son of a poor artisan. The humanist Lucio Marineo Siculo painted a picture of almost total anarchy in Spain: The kingdom, he said, was worn out by a multitude of murderers, adulterers, and thieves who scorned the law, "both human and divine," shamelessly violated wives, virgins, and nuns," and "cruelly assaulted and robbed tradesmen, travelers, and people on their way to fairs."

Only in the Lowlands was the scene somewhat different. There the dukes of Burgundy had constructed a vast and formless realm through conquest and the accident of feudal inheritance. In contrast to France or England, the dukes' rambling possessions, particularly the wealthy city of Bruges, that "Florence of Flanders," were accounted an earthly paradise. The dukes of Burgundy - Philip Without Fear, Philip the Good, Charles the Rash - were the first nobles of Europe,

calling themselves dukes by the grace of God and aspiring to the title of king. Their chivalric order of the Golden Fleece was the most coveted knightly association in Europe, and the nobility of the entire Continent eagerly sought to enter the order, which was limited to twenty-four "*gentils hommes de nom et d'armes et sans reproche.*"

But even in the rigid magnificence of their feudal court at Dijon, the house of Burgundy did not escape the taint of madness. Its last duke, Charles the Rash, was well named. Introverted, fanatic, and stubborn, he symbolized the worst and most unyielding aspect of the feudal spirit, insatiable pride. In the end, his reckless ambitions and boundless greed, and his unreasoning hatred for the King of France, to whom he owed feudal fealty, destroyed him. His death in 1477 and the collapse of his feudal army, impaled upon the pikes of modern Swiss mercenaries hired by France, demonstrated that medieval knighthood was as moribund as feudal monarchy.

Never was the contrast between theory and reality so marked as in the gulf that existed between the ideals and actions of the feudal nobility. The knight remained the social paradigm of the fifteenth century, but the reasons for his existence had vanished in the face of royal law and government bureaucracy, Swiss pikemen, English longbows, and that costly but "final argument of kings," the cannon. At one time, the mounted feudal knight had been the effective, if unruly, instrument by which princes had been able to maintain a reasonable degree of security. Above all else, the knight had been a warrior, and the ethics and structure of feudalism had been geared to his military activities. The virtues of his caste were those of the hero; he was expected to "protect the Church, to fight against treachery, to reverence the priesthood, to fend off injustice from the poor, to make peace in his own province, to shed his blood for his brethren, and if need be, to lay down his life" for his overlord.

By the end of the Middle Ages, reality was quite otherwise. "Only the name of nobility remains," wrote one fifteenth-century critic of the knightly order, branding it as "a nutshell, without a kernel, which was full of worms." The medieval knight may have been well adapted for private brawls or religious crusades, but now he was obsolete; the advent of gunpowder had made killing so easy that it was no longer the

work of experts. Although war remained in the estimation of knighthood "a glorious thing," more and more the knight had to leave war to mercenaries, who were not made immobile by cumbersome suits of armor and who fought for money not for diversion or glory.

As knightly existence lost military significance and political purpose, it gained in ceremony and formality. The chivalric code went to seed and became mere politeness, ostentation, and extravagance. Knights wore shoes with beaks so long that they impeded walking; their ladies adorned themselves with peaked caps two feet high; cloaks were pieced together from 3,000 sable skins, and the Duke of Orleans used 700 pearls to embroider a song upon his sleeve. Extravagance of attire became the mark not only of a bottomless exchequer but also of nobility itself. The knightly order was more than once dismissed as "mere disorder," and throughout Europe the picture of the mighty noble, proud, predatory, and unruly, claiming a privileged place in society as his ancestral birthright, became the symbol for violence, mismanagement, and anarchy. Their irresponsibility became proverbial: "The nobles make promises," it was said, "and the peasants keep them."

But the century's "greatest scourge" and "the source and germ of all disorders" was the Church, where men who were ignorant and impious had raised themselves to high pastoral office. In a world surrounded by perpetual pain and accustomed to death, which struck at infants in their cradles and at mothers in childbirth, God's Church stood as a sentinel against evil and offered to man the hope of salvation. It enveloped every human act from birth to death with meaning and richness, and always it held out to mankind the picture of paradise. Hope, faith, and charity were the pillars of its doctrine, and it assured all men, irrespective of rank or profession, that God's mercy was available to them. The essence of medieval Christianity was the doctrine of hope and moderation - hope of salvation and moderation in life. "Man," said Saint Thomas Aquinas, "is called by nature to live in society that he may not only live but live the good life." The good life was, in effect, the exercise of moderation and charity in the affairs of this world and the constant hope that God's mercy would bring man safely into the next world. For the man who lived by these standards, the gates of heaven were forever open.

In the attainment of this ideal, the role of the Church was vital. Not only did the Church maintain a tight hold upon the keys to the kingdom of heaven but it also kept a sharp eye on man's actions on earth. Men woke, slept, and worked to the knelling of bells. They were baptized, confirmed, married, confessed, and shriven within the fold of the universal Church. Their wills were probated, their charity administered, their children taught, their minds shaped, and their transgressions judged by clerics. Great and small, prince and pauper were expected to render account to God's vicar on earth, and every act, from the bureaucrat's financial peculations to the peasant's petty adulteries, was judged in terms of man's ultimate purpose on earth - his salvation or damnation. A careful regulation of the economic impulses of society was considered as essential to man's spiritual welfare as it was to his material well-being. There was a righteous price in commerce, based on considerations of morality, as well as an economic price, reflecting the laws of supply and demand. Gluttony and lack of moderation - be they found in capitalistic ventures, usurious rates of interest, baronial pretensions, or monarchical sharp practices - were condemned as being cancerous to society and dangerous to the soul's salvation. Nothing burned more fiercely in a medieval Christian hell than pride, the mother of egotism, greed, and treason, and "the whole puddle and sink of all sins against God and man."

By the fifteenth century, the Church's way of life had long since ceased to correspond to its ideals. In becoming rich, autonomous, privileged, and complacent, it began to forsake the virtues that had originally been the source of its strength. The medieval world learned to despise the unpreaching prelate "loitering in his lordships," the tricky ecclesiastical lawyer extracting the last penny in legal fees, and the papal tax collector bent on fleecing God's flock. It was not so much that churchmen were more corrupt than royal servants or aristocratic brigands; it was merely that the ecclesiastical body was judged by a higher standard. The ignorant peasant was a source of humor, the slothful priest was scandalous; the profiteer in commerce was secretly admired, the greedy cleric was shocking; the Machiavellian bureaucrat was honored, the conniving clergyman was condemned. Ideally, priests and prelates were the curators of souls and the representatives of a higher way of life; in fact, they were

lawyers, tax collectors, and financiers. Whether the Vatican by 1499 had become the sewer of the world, as it was later claimed, is debatable, but certainly religion and morality were parting company, the former degenerating into a business and the latter all but disappearing from the Church. When Cardinal Borgia, later Pope Alexander VI, was criticized for selling pardons for criminal offenses, he is supposed to have replied: "God desires not the death of sinners but that they should pay and live."

Ideally, the Church was unified and universal, the keeper of Europe's conscience and the curator of Christian souls. In reality, it presented to the world the picture of religious schism in which popes and even saints squabbled over the keys of paradise, and Christians wondered whether Urban at Rome was the rightful heir to Saint Peter's throne and Clement at Avignon was the anti-Christ, as Saint Catherine of Siena stated, or whether the situation was reversed, as Saint Vincent claimed. In the face of such spiritual strife, there seemed to be no certainty in life, and men whispered abroad that nobody could be saved while the Great Schism endured.

On all sides, there was growing evidence that a spiritual cancer was crippling the Church, profaning its ideals, and making a mockery of its aspirations. The image of the Madonna and Child, symbolizing the infinite compassion of the Virgin and the innocence of the Christ Child, was a cherished Christian theme; by the fifteenth century, that ideal had degenerated into an artistic convention, meaningless and profane, in which ladies of high fashion posed for their portraits holding naked children in their laps. In the hands of artist Jean Fouquet, the Virgin became a fashionable whore surrounded by cherubs who looked like red imps. Legend says that the model was Agnes Sorel, mistress to Charles VII of France. Even Hans Memling, one of the greatest of the Rhenish religious painters, did an altarpiece in which he portrayed the Duchess of Burgundy as Saint Barbara. She was dressed in the height of fashion, her eyebrows carefully plucked, her temples shaven, and her head adorned with a brightly jeweled turban. One of Memling's disciples went further, profaning the Assumption of the Virgin by representing the Mother of God as a nude Venus. Moralists complained, with some cause, that "nowadays, there is not an altar but a harlot stands thereon. . . . What sort of piety does this breed in a young cleric when he prays his *confiteor* and

sees these pretty statues in front of him?”

The calamities of late medieval society seemed to be without end, and men warned that disease, death, suffering, and war were manifestations of God’s wrath directed against a depraved and corrupt Church and against those individuals who had allowed the devil to enter into their lives. It seemed that the voice of Cassandra spoke nothing but the truth, for in 1348, death struck in proportions that annihilated hope and came close to destroying society itself. Possibly one- fourth to one-half of Europe died in a bubonic plague epidemic, during which there remained neither priest nor grave digger to attend the dead and dying. With terrifying perversity, the Black Death struck down the healthiest and most vigorous elements within society. Between 40 to 60 percent of the clergy were liquidated; entire villages were wiped out; one educated guess presents the total mortality at 20 million persons. Economically, the plague came close to destroying Europe. Trade stagnated, and incomes for every section of society began to wither. As the death tolls increased, the nobility faced ruin with rents from their land slowly diminishing and their peasants demanding higher and higher wages and greater and greater freedom. Merchants and artisans were caught up in a vast depression cycle of contracting markets and increasing violence, for barons and peasants, artisans and bankers alike were willing to risk political gangsterism and economic sharp practices to save what little remained.

On the heels of internal crisis came the shock of invasion from the east. For centuries Europe had been secure; Christianity had been the aggressor, not the defender, and the boundaries of Christendom had been pushed forward at the expense of the followers of Allah. In 1396, Sultan Bayazid, called the Flash of Lightning, destroyed the last of Europe’s crusading armies and took a great oath that he would not rest till he could hitch his horse to the altar of St. Peter’s Church. A century later, the sultan’s descendants seemed on the verge of fulfilling that oath when on May 29, 1453, the imperial city of Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks, and a militant Muslim faith turned Santa Sophia into a mosque. The fall of Constantinople meant the loss of the largest city in Christendom and the end of the eastern Roman Empire. More important, it opened eastern and southern Europe to the expansion of the Muslim faith. Athens fell in

1458; Italy was invaded, and the city of Otranto was taken and put to the sword in August 1480.

Popes and bishops regularly preached the desperate need for a new crusade against the infidel, but the response was apathetic. The Christian world was too torn by internal strife to react against the Muslim aggressor, and the medieval crusading spirit had long since died. Kings, princes, and merchants talked much of a crusade, but their words were meaningless. Their crusading zeal was displayed at the magnificent Feast of the Pheasant, held in Lille in 1454 by Philip, the Duke of Burgundy. The knights of the Golden Fleece, dressed in vermilion velvet and gold cloth, were entertained at lavishly decorated tables: On one stood a church complete with ringing bells and singing choir, and on another was a pie in which twenty-eight musicians played. The climax of the banquet occurred when a fair damsel entered the great hall riding on an elephant led by a giant dressed in Turkish costume. The symbolic meaning was clear: The Holy Church was in chains to the infidel, and the lady herself appealed to the knights of the Golden Fleece to liberate the ecclesia and free Constantinople. Philip and his knights were presented with a pheasant bedecked with gold and precious jewels, whereupon they rose and in the name of the pheasant and the Virgin Mary vowed to take up the sword in defense of the true faith. None had any real intention of going on a crusade. In the end, what saved Europe from Turkish conquest was the death of Mohammed II in 1481 and the voluntary withdrawal of Turkish troops from Italy.

As the medieval world stood on the threshold of a new century, all that contemporaries could see was the misery of life, the cold of the night, and the heat of the day. From the curses directed against the lice and fleas that made life hideous, to the cries of victims of the Black Death, "thick fogs of lamentation" lay heavy upon Christendom. Confronted by the disgusting death reserved for those tortured by the plague and for those unfortunate enough to fall into the hands of bandits, Christians asked themselves what kind of God could bring such suffering to his flock and what terrible sins had humanity committed to warrant such punishment.

Europe was in panic, a state of shock, the repercussions of which lasted long into the Elizabethan age. Surrounded by inordinate death, senseless destruction, and awful suffering,

moderation seemed to be impossible, and men looked to a life of extremes as the only way out of their fear and disillusionment. Some men turned their backs on the old way of life and took refuge in worldly excesses and material success. "If," said Cosimo de Medici, "Saint Peter is to keep the keys . . . to the tree of knowledge as well as those of the gates of heaven and hell . . . nine tenths of us would prefer to go to Beelzebub at the beginning, instead of having to do so at the end." In the Lowlands, where, despite economic decline, the profits of commerce and sin could still be enjoyed to the full, fat burghers who had "no God but their belly and their moneybags" were almost as successful as Cosimo in his Florentine palace. They were content to concentrate on their account books and drown their consciences in beer and schnapps.

Others, generally the less successful, condemned the life of the commercial cities as vicious and depraved, and turned instead to religious fanaticism. The idea of hell, "where there is no voice but of weeping, no face but of the tormentors," drove men of tender conscience to all sorts of emotional extremes - masochistic religious practices, witchcraft, diabolism, superstition, and mysticism. Satan covered the world with his black wings, and men sought in a variety of fantastic ways either to escape his clutches or to join his ranks. Flagellant monks, garbed in white, bearing red crosses, and ceaselessly chanting their prayers, wandered Europe. They denounced the evils of humanity and renounced the Church's path to salvation through the sacraments, claiming that self-flagellation was the true communion, for only when the blood of man was joined to that of Christ could the sinner find redemption. Religious sensationalism of every variety was on the increase. In 1429, Friar Richard of Paris thundered dire warnings for ten consecutive days, beginning at sunrise and continuing without stop for five or six hours. He urged his listeners, who numbered between 5,000 and 6,000, to burn their lewd books, cast away their rich apparel, and renounce the evil in their lives.

Though churchmen struck out against the religious extremists whose depiction of hell "milked an old woman to tears" or made "her blood run cold," spiritual emotionalism and the appeal to the imagination became the dominant motif of late medieval religious expression. At the monastic hospital of Isenheim, which specialized in the care of syphilitics, Mathias

Grunewald was commissioned to paint his greatest altarpiece. The Christ that he portrayed was even more diseased than the inmates of the hospital. Twisted, bleeding, and decayed, the Saviour's body hung in agony. To those afflicted with incurable venereal disease, which inevitably ended in madness and death, the sight of the dying Christ and the imaginative and sensual witnessing of his suffering were the only reliefs available.

In the general breakdown of morality and moderation, there were some who argued that if there was no escape from damnation then they might as well invoke the devil and enjoy his company. Alchemy and astrology were old and recognized professions; in the fifteenth century, a new urgency entered the efforts of men of letters and of wealth who sought the stone of knowledge, the well of eternal youth, and the magic of transmuting base metals into gold. The most notorious of these was Gilles de Rais, a colleague of Joan of Arc, marshal of France, humanist, and sorcerer, who practiced the black arts, worshiped the devil, and butchered more than 140 children. After eight years of ritualistic murders, he was finally detected; in 1440, he was hanged in flames.

Nothing more clearly revealed the degree to which the old standards had lost their hold over society during this time than the decline of orthodox religion itself. More and more, religion was viewed as a means of propitiating an ill-natured deity. Most men firmly believed that "a candle offered to Saint Lowye" would protect their cattle from disaster and that a gift made to the Virgin would stave off evil. For the late medieval world, religion was a variety of magic: The scrupulous and absolute fulfillment of the teachings of the Church bestowed magic power upon the performer. As the peasant burned a candle for Saint Lowye, so King Louis XI of France endowed chapels and monasteries. When the Lord faltered in his bargain and failed to reward the faithful with material success, both king and peasant were justifiably enraged.

The desire to warrant salvation in the midst of sin and to propitiate the anger of a vengeful god by any means possible led men not only into superstition but also into the elaboration and repetition of Church ritual. A form of galloping mechanization seized religion. If the collecting of relics, the saying of prayers, and the burning of candles were

desirable, then it seemed to follow that the more candles offered and the more relics collected, the greater a man's chance of salvation. At Wittenberg, Frederick the Wise of Saxony was seized by exactly such a quantitative approach to faith and became an avid collector of relics. By 1509, he had gathered a museum of holy treasures that included four hairs from the Virgin's head, three pieces from her cloak, four from her girdle, and seven from her veil, a wisp of straw from the manger, a piece of gold presented by the Wise Men, a strand of Jesus's beard, a thorn from his crown, a morsel of bread left over from the Last Supper, and a nail certified to have pierced the Saviour's hand. In all, there were 19,013 sacred bones stored in the castle church. No wonder the Florentine reformer Savonarola thundered that "all fervor and inward worship are dead, and ceremonies wax more numerous, but have lost their efficacy."

Exaggeration, elaboration, and proliferation came to predominate in architecture, dress, vows, and speech, just as it did in religion. Sermons became marathons; vows grew longer and more elaborate, but they always had some tricky qualifications that prevented their fulfillment; clothing became flamboyant and erotic as grotesque codpieces for men and low-cut gowns for women emphasized the sensuality of the age. Architectural design tended to become all form and no soul as ornamental details and ostentatious magnificence began to replace the simplicity of the early Gothic perpendicular outline. Cathedrals became houses of light, not of God, monuments to man's architectural inspiration, where humanity worshiped its own ingenuity and not God's presence.

As inward worship withered, fascination with mortality increased. Later, Elizabethans would find that the ever-present threat of death kindled not a morbid terror of death but a passionate preoccupation with living; but in the fifteenth century and the early years of the sixteenth it engendered necrophilia, a fascination with death and bodily decay. The ugly process that turns all to "earth, ashes, dust, and worm's meat" and devours "thy beautiful face, thy fair nose, thy clear eyes, thy white hands, thy goodly body" was feared and yet revered. The equality and the unexpectedness of death caught and held the medieval mind. Places of execution - Tyburn, outside of London, where the Marble Arch now stands, or the giant gibbet of Montfaucon in Paris -

became centers of entertainment and sources of perverse fascination. Montfaucon with its colonnade of gibbets and its iron-grated grave pit, into which the blackened bodies were thrown, was a picnicking place for young gallants, who took their girls to the execution grounds for an evening of good cheer.

The most famous and revered sight in Paris was the ancient Cemetery of the Innocents, where almost 1 million people, mostly paupers and plague victims, had been buried in nameless graves. By the end of the twelfth century, the Innocents had been walled-in and a cloistered arcade constructed, where Parisians promenaded in the evening. The walls were lined with shops and vendors' stalls, and within the cloister, resting on open shelves, were great piles of human bones and skulls, which had been exhumed to make room for new arrivals as the cemetery filled up. There the bones slowly decomposed into dust and were eventually swept onto the pavement where the living walked and joked and speculated upon the grim dance in which not even the dead found rest. In 1424, the danse macabre was painted on the cloister wall. There, in stately elegance, was depicted the endless dance of death in which a skeleton dragged pope, peasant, and priest into the grave. Death held the hand of an abbess fresh from hearing Mass; he seized the scholar in the midst of his books; he awaited the emperor rejoicing upon his throne; he welcomed the usurer clinging to his gold; and he led the blind man to his destruction. Standing in the middle of the cemetery was a figure of Death himself, in cold stone, with raised arm and tightly clenched fist - the ultimate conqueror. Day after day, immense crowds were drawn to this place where the odor of corruption prevailed. Lumps of earth from the cemetery were thrown into the graves of those who could not be buried in its hallowed grounds, and visitors from every corner of Europe came to view and pay their respects to Death.

Among those who came to behold the charnel house and the thirty scenes of the danse macabre was the English poet John Lydgate, and in 1460, he commissioned a reproduction of the sequence in the cloister of Pardon Church, next to St. Paul's Cathedral in London. All of Europe imitated and embellished this theme of mortality and despair. The greatest of the dances of death was completed by Hans Holbein the Younger in 1526. His prints were published in 1538 and were so

popular that they went through eleven editions before 1562; by 1573, no less than five plagiarized versions appeared on the market. Numerous imitations of the Holbein *Dance* - possibly 100 - were published during the sixteenth century, for Elizabeth and her world were still somewhat touched with necrophilia. The graveyard scene remained a stock dramatic ploy; poor Yorick found as little rest as the Innocents of Paris, and John Knox took pleasure in warning Mary Queen of Scots that "foul worms will be busy with this flesh, be it never so fair and tender." Yet by the middle of the sixteenth century, the tone had begun to change. The Cemetery of the Innocents slowly lost its hold and was all but forgotten; its stores were closed, and its crowds dispersed. Eventually, it was destroyed in the name of progress.

Even in the fifteenth century, amidst an aura of decay, there still lingered the breath of hope; the generation that erected the monument to Death in the Cemetery of the Innocents also produced the statue of René of Chalons. René commissioned his wife to have an effigy done of him as he would look three years after death. The form is that of the familiar and grotesque cadaver, yet there is an exalted quality about the pose, for the old warrior is shown holding up a representation of his soul - the one element of his humanity still untouched by corruption and death. When Elizabeth's grandfather, Henry VII, the founder of the Tudor dynasty, came to the throne in 1485, life expectancy was no greater than it had been 100 years before, but the reaction to death was slowly changing; new impulses and new ideas were beginning to lift Europe out of the despair and depression of a dying civilization. The scent of optimism was growing stronger as the fifteenth century gave way to the sixteenth.

For the picture of despair, the sense that all men go wandering about without any goal and without knowing what is happening to them, is only one side of the fifteenth-century profile. The Cimmerian darkness contained the hint of a new dawn; in the midst of chaos lay hope of new order. Imperceptibly throughout the century, the archaic feudal image of depraved clerics, indolent monarchs, unruly barons, club-fisted usurers, and ranting fanatics receded, and a new outline began to emerge. Old bottles were filled with new wine, ancient dynasties were fortified with new blood, and unprofitable economic pursuits were replaced by new and vigorous enterprises. In state, Church, and business, men of

novel views and aggressive practices began to take over from those who lacked confidence in the future.

The harbingers of change were feared and hated because they advocated exactly those practices and doctrines most deplored by the defenders of the medieval way of life. On all sides, the antithesis of the Christian doctrine of moderation seemed to be triumphant: excessive concern with money among capitalistic venturers, inordinate and unscrupulous power exercised by the New Monarchs, immoderate religious sensibilities in the persons of Martin Luther and his disciples, and above all, a satanic view of life in which man became not only the measure of all things but the equal of God Himself. In Italy, Leon Battista Alberti announced that "men can do all things if they will," and Michelangelo was called divine. Man's ultimate conceit, and to the medieval mind his unforgivable blasphemy, was reserved for the German painter Albrecht Dürer, who in 1500 portrayed himself as Christ. The medieval doctrines of balance and moderation, which had died in the communal graves of the plague victims and in the anarchy of war and economic recession, were never resurrected. Instead, immoderation in government, in business, and in personal conduct triumphed and slowly came to be accepted as the norm.

Merely to describe the new spirit as secular is to misrepresent its flavor, the essence of which was individualism. In Church, state, art, and economic organization, men were breaking with the corporate society of the medieval past. In religion, Martin Luther set private judgment "against the faith held by all Christians for a thousand years." In economics, Cosimo de Medici knew that the Church's laws against usury and unethical commercial practices did not apply to him, for he had the Church itself, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost "in his books as debtors." In government, kings demanded a monopoly of power in which the rights and privileges of chartered towns, the ancient nobility, and the universal Church were sacrificed on the altar of the divine-right monarch, who claimed reasons of state as the highest justification for action.

The growing rigidity of the old guild system accelerated the process whereby a more rational, efficient, and competitive system of business enterprise was developed. The medieval guild, with its corporate and monopolistic economic structure,

protected the artisan from predatory competitors and the buying public from shoddy merchandise, but it had deteriorated into a self-perpetuating and niggardly organization, incapable of change and so encumbered with petty regulations as to make efficient production almost impossible. More and more, individual merchants and artisans - cloth makers, mining operators, tanners, importers of silks and spices - broke away from the older restrictions and went into business for themselves in defiance of the guild codes, the Church laws against usury, and the traditional system of ethics. They moved to the new centers of trade and prospered, because they lived by the standard that "conscience is a pretty thing to carry to Church," but he who "pursueth it in fair market or shop may die a beggar." Business shifted to Antwerp and Augsburg, where freer trade regulations and sharper mercantile practices helped transform the hard-working craftsman into a prince of commerce and finance. The acquisitive spirit in northern Europe may have hesitated at linking God and economic success in quite the same fashion as did the Italian trader Francisco di Marco Datini, who inscribed each of his account books with the words "in the name of God and of profit"; yet the German merchant Jacob Fugger of Augsburg considered it perfectly appropriate to write one of the most arrogant epitaphs ever conceived: "To God, All Powerful and Good! Jacob Fugger of Augsburg, ornament to his class and to his country, Imperial Councilor under Maximilian I and Charles V, second to none in the acquisition of extraordinary wealth, in liberality, in purity of life, and in greatness of soul, as he was comparable to none in life, so after death is not to be numbered among the mortal." A revolution had taken place, for what had once been branded as a vile and sordid love of money was now entertained as wisdom. Christopher Columbus could greedily avow before those Most Catholic Monarchs of Spain that "gold is most excellent - with gold is treasure made; he who has it can do whatever he wants."

In England, and to a lesser extent in the Lowlands and France, the spirit of commerce filtered down to the gentry, who began to discard their feudal outlook and judge nobility in terms of "the abundance of worldly goods." Younger sons of landed stock went into trade, and merchants sought to transform the profits of commerce into landed wealth. In doing so, they brought to the control of land a business spirit

that viewed the management of estates as a mercantile venture. Early in the fifteenth century, Englishmen had acquired the reputation of being a race "vainglorious of money." The swan song of medieval religious standards was sung, and the full measure of commercial respectability in town and shire was attained when in 1510 Dean John Colet chose to place the management of St. Paul's School in the hands of solid London "citizens of established reputation," because he had lost confidence in the good faith of priests and noblemen. There was, he said, "nothing certain in human affairs, he yet found the least corruption" in men of business.

Similar changes were taking place in the palaces of kings who were as anxious to modernize their kingdoms as financiers were to calculate the risks and profits in usury. It has been said of King Louis XI of France that he represented the worst side of the fifteenth century. Cold, deceitful, and suspicious, he viewed both God and man as purchasable and was so cautious that when he imported a particularly holy hermit from Italy, he insisted on testing the saintliness of his acquisition by placing before him the temptations of the flesh. Yet the qualities that earned Louis the sinister description of "the universal spider" were what made his reign successful and won him a place among the New Monarchs of Europe, rulers who were taking the first hesitant steps toward converting their medieval kingdoms into sovereign national states. Upon the thrones of England, France, and Spain sat monarchs who made up in success what they may have lacked in legitimacy or the traditional virtues of medieval kingship. The insanity and turpitude that had dogged royal leadership, and the forces that had been tearing the feudal monarchies asunder began to diminish during the final decades of the fifteenth century. Louis XI of France, Henry VII of England, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain were strong-minded sovereigns determined to be masters in their own realms, and they brought to their offices the two essentials of success that had already been applied to the counting-house - hard work and calculation.

Debate continues as to whether the New Monarchs were, in fact, as new as historians once considered them to be or whether they were simply modeling themselves upon older medieval sovereigns who also had worked to establish financial solvency and endeavored to liberate royal government from ecclesiastical interference and the meddling

of magnates. Yet something new had been added. There existed in government a degree of efficiency that had been unknown to the feudal world. Under the New Monarchs, law enforcement loomed higher than strict legality; the reality of power was more highly regarded than political theory; and the duties of subjects were of greater concern than the rights of peers, priests, and principalities. The old institutional forms remained, but a new spirit had entered them. Success was in the air, and the New Monarchs were as concerned with it as any calculating commercialist or enterprising landlord might be. In England, for the first time, a king was praised not for his heroism or his piety, but for those achievements attained by "acts of peace alone without sword or bloodshed." Henry VII was "full of notes," and with infinite care he initialed each page of the exchequer accounts and amassed a comfortable surplus in the treasury. Attention to the details of government and an astute understanding of the importance of finance were characteristic of Louis XI as well. Both monarchs knew the truth of the contemporary saying that in peace as well as in war "three things must be made ready: money, money, and once again money." They were willing to pay the price of success: the scorn of the old nobility who despised their bourgeois tastes, the hatred of all who envied their authority, and the endless hours of work that stood behind their achievement.

But it was their insistence on power, and not their hard work, that underlay the success of the New Monarchs. In England, France, and Spain the only conditions under which government could function were draconian, and monarchs demanded and achieved a measure of obedience that no feudal sovereign had ever enjoyed. In France, the tradition of immensely powerful and independent ducal families, who coined their own money and disregarded the king's law, was finally ended when Charles of Burgundy was destroyed. By 1483, the year of Louis XI's death, not only had the duchy of Burgundy been reunited to the French crown but so had Anjou, Maine, and Provence. Feudal nobles, chartered towns, and rebellious provinces had to learn that "obedience is best in each degree." No matter how unjust, brutal, and costly it was, the prince's will had to be accepted as law. Louis XI enacted more legislation than any sovereign since the days of Charlemagne. Under his rule, the burden of taxation steadily rose as the king successfully increased his nonfeudal

revenues from 1.5 million livres to nearly 5 million. Yet the price appeared small to Frenchmen who admired, even if they did not love, a monarch who argued that "the notable cities of Christianity have become great . . . not by exploits of arms but by good government."

In England, the same steps were taken when Henry VII and his son, Henry VIII, insisted that the only peace that might prevail was the king's peace, the only justice to be allowed was royal justice, and the only loyalty that mattered was devotion to the crown. The divine right of aristocracy slowly receded before the divinity that "doth hedge a king," and the old nobility reluctantly learned that the meanest servant of the crown had "sufficient warrant to arrest the greatest peer of this realm." Private armies, private justice, and private war had to give way if Englishmen were to live under a single law. Henry VII's income rose astonishingly from 52,000 pounds to 142,000 pounds. His subjects who lived lavishly were persuaded to part with their gold for their high living was evidence of their ability to contribute generously to the king's exchequer; conversely, those who lived in poverty were also relieved of their money on the grounds that their frugality was proof of great savings, a part of which should be offered to defray the kingdom's operating expenses.

Events in Spain followed a somewhat different path. No tradition of Iberian unity had ever existed. Disunited as England and France may have been, the theory of feudal unity remained. In fifteenth-century England royal justice may have been perverted by the great barons, but it remained royal. In France, the dukes of Burgundy may have regarded themselves as divine-right rulers, but they did fealty to the kings of France. Spain, in contrast, was not reunified, it was liberated. The common memory of the peninsula was not political union but a Christian crusade against the infidel. In 1469, the accident of dynastic marriage joined two of the peninsula's three major kingdoms together when Isabella, the Queen of Castile, and Ferdinand of Aragon were married. Though Ferdinand was as ruthless and calculating as any monarch of Europe, and Isabella as hard working, the forces that underlay Spanish union were spiritual, not political. More important than the need for internal security and good government was the demand that Spain, the citadel of the faith, be strengthened and prepared for its final victory over the Moors. The laws were codified and enforced, 150 mints

throughout the country were reduced to five, the currency was standardized, and the historic tariff barriers within the realm were abolished. The aristocracy were forbidden their cherished symbols of independence - the right to include a crown in their coats of arms, the license to be preceded by a macebearer, and the right to build castles. Above all else, the nobility were persuaded to part with the lavish grants and sinecures that they had been able to extort from countless feudal kings, and the Catholic monarchs found themselves 30 million maravedis richer each year than their predecessors had been. The argument that induced the aristocracy to disgorge such sums and to accept correction was, significantly enough, the plea that money and discipline were necessary to expel the Moors from Spain.

By 1500, a new phenomenon had materialized in Europe: the sovereign national state. Feudal government had been a composite of rights, liberties, and privileges, and feudal subjects had been united by weak ties of allegiance only to the king. Man's first loyalty had rested with his village, his profession, his overlord, and his Church. On occasion, feudal monarchs had been inspired leaders of men, but rarely, except possibly in England, did they view themselves as the regal symbol of state. Now, however, change was everywhere apparent. The medieval world had looked on government as a necessary evil at best; sixteenth-century man was beginning to suggest the strange notion that it might be a positive good. Slowly an image of society was evolving in which the state was viewed as a living organism with a will and rationale of its own. The ambassador no longer spoke for his province or for his profession but for the common good. The business of the ambassador, said one Venetian civil servant, was to "do, say, advise, and think only whatever may best serve the preservation and aggrandizement of his own state.

The truth was no longer to be sought only in God's laws or in Christian morality; it could be created to suit the needs of the state. "The opinion of the world," said Henry VIII, "is often stronger than the truth"; and public opinion was a commodity that the sixteenth century quickly learned could be molded to conform to the purposes of national policy. For reasons of state, Francis I of France could ally himself with the infidel Turk in defiance of Christian opinion, even though Suleiman the Magnificent was about to attack Vienna. In the name of state diplomacy, a Scottish archbishop was assassinated by

order of a Christian King of England. In the name of the welfare of the state, an English bishop so forgot higher laws as to argue that "in matters of state individuals were not to be so much regarded as the whole body of the citizens."

The more the state was heralded as the altar on which private and feudal rights had to be sacrificed, the more men and women sang the praises of their own land and noted their neighbor's defects. National consciousness, a sense of Englishness, Spanishness, or Frenchness, was relatively new to the sixteenth century, but dislike of strangers had been a common characteristic of the medieval world. The traveler from southern France who ventured as far north as Paris found Parisian French almost incomprehensible; Englishmen spoke a babble of dialects; neighboring villages eyed one another with suspicion; Frenchmen were convinced that Englishmen were born with tails. The birth of the state converted man's inherent prejudice for his family, his village, and his faith into a larger loyalty, so that by 1500, one traveler could complain that Englishmen think "there are no other men than themselves, and no other world but England; and whenever they see a handsome foreigner, they say that 'he looks like an Englishman'." England had been transformed into "this other Eden, demiparadise," while Spain, with its religious preoccupation, was becoming a land in which all men should seek to live and die "because of the faith there, which is so Catholic, so firm, and so true."

The indispensable conditions of statehood - linguistic unity and nationalistic pride - were rapidly developing in Spain, England, and France during the fifteenth century. London English, Parisian French, and Castilian Spanish came to predominate over rival dialects, and each became the medium through which the state sang the praises of its own uniqueness and virtues. The first grammar of any modern language was presented to Queen Isabella in 1492, and Spaniards were so convinced of the superiority of their tongue that they boasted "one can more rightly fear its descent than hope for its elevation." Englishmen were even more extreme in their defense of their native language, and one devotee asserted that his Anglo-Saxon tongue may not be "as sacred as the Hebrew or as learned as the Greek," but it was "as fluent as the Latin, as courteous as the Spanish, as courtlike as the French, and as amorous as the Italian."

When the New Monarchs associated themselves with national prejudice, and Bluff King Hal and Gloriana became the symbols for all that was best and English, or Francis I became for all Frenchmen *mon Roi, mon Seigneur, mon César,* then sovereigns became not kings to be obeyed, but idols to be worshiped. This demanded the destruction of one of the most sacred and essential elements of the medieval formula - the balanced obligation offered to both God and Caesar. Lord, commoner, and clergyman learned that he owed his first duty to the crown. The full measure of Tudor authority was voiced when it was said of Bishop Fox that to "serve the king's turn [he] would agree to his own father's death." The great humanist scholar Erasmus spoke little more than the simple truth when he said that before the threat of princes "the people tremble, the senate yields, the nobility cringe, the judges concur, the divines are dumb, the lawyers assent, the law and constitution give way, neither right nor religion, neither justice nor humanity avails."

New nations, New Monarchs, new financiers were symptomatic of a new spirit. Optimism was in the air, in government, in commerce, and even in religion, and Erasmus could confidently predict a future in which true Christian piety, sound scholarship, and public peace would prevail. An increasing and articulate coterie of scholars, artists, magistrates, and popes was beginning to look away from the danse macabre and turn instead to the dance of life. In Venice, where a golden shower of ducats had produced a society in which artists, scholars, courtesans, and merchants were judged by the single standard, talent, the visiting painter Albrecht Dürer suddenly discovered he was a gentleman, although at home in Germany he was still "a parasite." In the early years of the sixteenth century, the rich vitality of Renaissance Italy moved northward, bringing with it a view of the world in which the individual was held up as the highest expression of divine wisdom. In man, as Pico della Mirandola said, was to be "found all and every ratio and proportion by which God reveals the innermost secrets of nature." In England and France, the second generation of the New Monarchs seemed to herald a new age in which "the heavens laugh, the earth exults, and all things are full of milk, of honey, and of nectar!"

The spirit that transformed the youthful courts of Henry VIII and Francis I into pavilions of Renaissance brilliance was

classical in flavor, humanistic in its insistence upon the worth of man, naïve in its expectations, and defiant in denying the medieval view of man's role in the divine order of things. The sin that the medieval world had most warned against - the exaltation of the individual - was the virtue that the humanists extolled. Where the past had preached against pride, the Renaissance praised the virtuosity and creative genius of human talent in every field. Where the medieval Church had thundered against preoccupation with the affairs of this world, the early sixteenth century applauded the universal man who tasted every facet of life. Where man's humility in the face of the mysteries of life and death had once been acclaimed, now it was condemned. The individual was urged to dare all, test all, and inquire into the secrets of heaven and hell.

In Italy and in parts of northern Europe, men agreed that a golden age had undoubtedly arrived, restoring the light of the liberal arts that had almost been destroyed. In France, the humanist Louis Budé sang paeans to "sacred truth" which, he claimed, was beginning "to shine forth from the filth of the sophist school." In the Lowlands, Erasmus of Rotterdam begged to be rejuvenated for a few years so as to enjoy the approaching golden age of learning. In Germany, Ulrich von Hutten wrote: "Oh world, oh letters, it is a delight to live."

Yet in the midst of this enthusiasm, the need for spiritual authority remained. Humanism, with its pedantic overtones and naive individualism, proved to be distasteful to those of non-intellectual appetite. It was well for Erasmus to purge the Church with laughter, to wash away abuse with mirth, and expose the foibles of society to friendly ridicule. But the weight of clerical corruption was too heavy to be lifted by mere laughter. Scholarly reform within the Church lacked the strength to do more than reveal the sickness of Christendom; it could not cure it. It was Erasmus himself, the prince of all humanists, who confessed the underlying weakness of the reforming scholar when he sadly acknowledged that not everyone had "the courage to be a martyr. I am afraid if I were put to the trial, I should be like Peter."

The medieval ecclesia faced little danger from humanism; the enemy lay closer to home, within the Church itself. The path of religious revolution was not cut with the sharp ax of humanism but with the heavy sword of Martin Luther's

spiritual despair. Luther was no child of the Renaissance. He was born of peasant stock in 1483 in Saxony, where men of piety still said their paternosters and attended Mass. He was a young man of deep religious sensibilities, who united a persistent conviction of his own impending damnation with a pressing sense of God's dreadful omnipotence and ruthless justice. Like a good son of the medieval Church, he turned in 1505 to a monastery - to the Augustinian community at Erfurt - to seek religious solace. By a life of fasting, prayer, and self-discipline and by the meticulous observation of every detail of the monastic rule, he sought to find salvation. "True it is," he confessed, "I was a good monk and . . . if ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery, it was I." Monkery seemed to fail in its purpose, however, for his sense of guilt remained until one day when he happened to ponder anew the words of Saint Paul: "The just shall live by faith." Thereupon he knew himself to have been reborn and the endless night of doubt and anguish receded; Luther had "gone through open doors into paradise." The path to heaven was through the doctrine of justification by "faith alone." The old medieval balance between good works and faith was demolished. It was not necessary to light candles, renounce life, retreat into a monastery, or endow chapels, for the excellent reason that heaven could not be bought with pious works. Man was saved by God's infinite mercy, and humanity could in no way warrant, merit, or purchase salvation; all it could do was to have faith in divine charity.

The implications of the new doctrine were revolutionary. To the claims of the medieval Church, to an absolute control of the channels by which God's grace was dispensed to man, Luther proclaimed that individuals were saved by their own faith without benefit of sacrament or cleric. To the Church's assertion of a monopoly of the roads to salvation, Luther set up the priesthood of all the faithful in which there was no distinction between a priest and a layman. To the Church's insistence that God spoke only through the ecclesiastical hierarchy of popes, bishops, and priests, Luther maintained the right of the individual, inspired by his faith, to comprehend God's word as revealed in Scripture.

Luther did not learn his theology all at once. From the monastery, he was called to the new University of Wittenberg, where he lectured on the Bible and slowly formulated his religious views. It was only in 1516 that the

sequence of events commenced that ultimately led him to challenge the entire edifice of medieval Catholicism and to destroy forever the spiritual unity of Christendom. The episode involved the flagrant abuse of good works, an example of the mechanization and ceremonialism of the medieval Church. The papacy of Leo X needed silver to pay for the construction of the new basilica of St. Peter at Rome. In order to raise the money, the pope turned to the international banking house of the Fuggers to supervise the collection. Johann Tetzel, a Dominican monk, acted as chief collector and canvassed Germany, selling indulgences, which were guaranteed to deliver souls from purgatory. He assured his listeners that:

As soon as the coin in the coffer rings

The soul from purgatory springs.

When Tetzel approached Wittenberg, Luther struck out against the belief that remission of sin could be bought, and on October 31, 1517, he posted on the castle church door his ninety-five theses, questioning the purpose of the indulgences, their spiritual value, and the pope's authority to issue them to individual Christians.

Unexpectedly, a personal and academic vendetta became the signal for spiritual revolution. Luther was acclaimed a hero by those who resented the draining away of German money to Rome in order to build the "insatiable basilica" of St. Peter and by those who wished to rid the Church of its commercialism, ritualism, and sterility. Every effort to discipline the wayward monk produced stronger words of defiance, until Luther stood in open rebellion against the entire Catholic Church. At the Imperial Diet at Worms in April 1521, he voiced the final logic of his heresy: "Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other - my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise." To the Emperor Charles V, who sat listening to Luther's presumptuous challenge, it seemed intolerable that "a single monk, led astray by private judgment," should have impudently concluded "that all Christians up till now have erred." But pope and emperor,

medieval Church and empire reckoned without "the marvelous comfort and quietness" that Luther's message held for all who felt close upon them the fires of damnation or who could find no relief in the bosom of the Catholic ecclesia. The reformer's books sold everywhere and 600 copies of his theses were sent to France, Spain, and England, where men of similar heart were eager to receive them. Plagued by the same sense of despair, they followed in his footsteps or sought their own brand of spiritual solace in defiance of established authority and ancient formulas.

In religion, in politics, in commerce, and in the governments of men, change surged and swelled, and by 1533, the year of Elizabeth's birth, the main outlines of modern Europe were clearly discernible. Although Elizabeth and her generation stood on the threshold of modernity, the ghost of medievalism lingered on, fettering the minds of men and holding captive their imaginations. Scratch an Elizabethan deeply and a medieval man lies revealed. The humanist scholar Sir Thomas More has been called the first man to apply human reason to the study of a sane and realistic society, yet More sacrificed his life for the medieval concept of a unified Christendom. The Frenchman Jean Bodin was capable of perceiving that the curse of inflation that afflicted Europe in the sixteenth century was the result of a glut on the money market caused by gold and silver from the New World. Yet Bodin wrote in defense of witchcraft and carried the title of Satan's Attorney General. The attraction of the Cemetery of the Innocents was passing, but the human body in various stages of decomposition remained a popular theme of tombstone art.

Everywhere the medieval heritage died hard, and the new impulses in society faced constant challenge from the past. Feudal castles still stood, ties of fealty and blood remained strong, and most men's image of society continued to be medieval. Throughout Europe, the social order was still supposed to be static, closed, hierarchical, and religiously inspired. The Elizabethan state was no human contrivance constructed to advance the material well-being of man. It remained a divinely ordained structure into which individuals were born with prescribed duties and fixed status. The favorite political metaphor of the age was the beehive in which all members knew their place and over which the queen and her aristocracy ruled. The sixteenth century

insisted upon "a head to rule, priests to pray, counselors to counsel, judges to judge, noblemen to give orders, soldiers to defend, farmers to till, tradesmen to do business, and artisans to take care of mechanical matters."

The much proclaimed sovereign national state was as yet no leviathan, and though it demanded the loyalty of all its subjects, it still lacked the machinery to make its claims completely effective. During much of the sixteenth century, Parisians were "so ready to uproars and insurrections that foreign nations wondered at the patience of the kings of France." Royal patience, however, was unavoidable, for 12,000 royal officials endeavored, rather ineffectually, to govern 15 million Frenchmen, a figure that represents a ratio of one official for every 1,250 inhabitants. By today's standards and proportions, which work out to one official for every seventy Frenchmen, France was scarcely burdened with an overabundance of government. The era of private armies and feudal revolts was far from ended. Overmighty subjects still retained vast military and economic resources and did not hesitate to appeal to clan, custom, and feudal privilege. During the winter of 1569-70, the feudal north in England made a last bid to return to "the good old days," and in France, the tottering realm was engulfed by a series of bitter dynastic, regional, and religious wars that lasted for over a generation.

National states were increasing in strength, yet the myth of European political unity still excited the imagination; the fatuous dignities of the Holy Roman Emperor were still held in awe; and the European family of states was still considered to be subject to divine governance. Medieval theory and contemporary reality stood at total variance with one another, but most men - even rebels like Luther - still desired a return to the days when there had been but one truth, one faith, and one Church. The existence of two absolute truths -one Catholic, the other Protestant - meant not toleration but religious controversy, in which the faithful were urged to sacrifice all other concerns for the defense and aggrandizement of their particular brand of orthodoxy. The clash of loyalties to God, to fellowman, to state, to family, and to feudal overlord imposed strains on society as great as those that had existed in the fifteenth century and produced equally violent extremes of despondency and delight. In France, the Lowlands, and parts of Germany, society

dissolved into civil war and religious bloodshed; in Spain, the state became the hallowed instrument of Catholic truth; and in Geneva, an equally belligerent Protestant orthodoxy prevailed. It was in England alone that a more moderate political and religious pattern of behavior came to triumph thanks to the magic of a virgin queen.

II

SIN AND SCHISM

Elizabeth may not have been born in sin as the Catholic Church claimed, but she was certainly the child of schism, and her sex was a source of bitter disappointment to a parent who had risked his crown and kingdom in the hope of fathering a legitimate male heir. From the moment of her conception, the princess's sex and legitimacy were crucial factors in the course of European history. Elizabeth was born into a world that viewed her birth and continued good health as the cardinal stumbling block to the spiritual reunification of Christendom and the extinction of the Protestant heresy. Most of Europe, and possibly even a majority in England, regarded her as the product of adultery, a royal bastard who could not legally succeed to the throne. Only a few militant Protestants greeted her arrival with fervent prayers of thankfulness, and even they were dismayed that the future of their faith should be tied to the frail life of a girl. As for her father, he was outraged that God and fortune had made him ridiculous by presenting him with still another heiress to his kingdom.

The story of Elizabeth's birth goes back before the year 1527, when Henry VIII was forced to contend with three interrelated emotions: mounting concern over his queen - Catherine of Aragon's - advancing years and her failure to bear a living son; the sting of conscience for having married his deceased brother's wife; and a violent sexual attraction for a young lady of the court, who obstinately insisted that sharing her sovereign's crown was going to be a prerequisite to sharing his bed.

As a young man, Henry had fulfilled his father's deathbed request that he marry Catherine, daughter of Isabella and Ferdinand of Spain and widow of Henry's brother, Prince Arthur. Special papal dispensation had been arranged so that the king might not violate the law in the Book of Leviticus that clearly stated: "If a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing . . . they shall be childless." Marriage with Catherine had not actually been barren and the queen had done her best. Five children had been born, but only a daughter survived, a sure invitation to disputed succession and civil war. By 1527, Catherine was an aging and rotund lady of forty-two, and her husband, who was six years her junior, began to ponder, despite papal assurances to the contrary, whether he was not, in fact, an incestuous king and the unhappy object of Heaven's righteous anger.

Whether the sequence of events that culminated in history's most celebrated divorce suit stemmed from Henry's tender conscience or his far from tender infatuation with the ebony-eyed beauty Anne Boleyn is more a matter of personal judgment than of verifiable historic fact. What is clear is that the case was presented to the world as a question of political necessity; no matter what the price, England had to have a legitimate male heir to secure the succession and save the kingdom from a bitter civil war between the advocates of the king's legitimate daughter, Mary, and his only son, the illegitimate Duke of Richmond.

Every consideration seemed to call for divorce, a step that was hardly unique in the annals of dynastic history. Wives of royalty promised to be "bonair and buxom in bed and at board," and when they went so far as to forget their wedding vows, it was accepted procedure to put them aside in favor of someone who was capable of providing sons and heirs - those most precious assets in an age of high infant mortality. In a world that made exceptions for kings and princes and looked kindly upon the matrimonial requirements of sovereigns, Henry anticipated no problem in obtaining a divorce. The pope had obliged him by making it possible to marry Catherine in the first place, so now, eighteen years later, it was expected that His Holiness would grant his faithful son and Defender of the Faith the privilege of breaking the rules again and allow him to divorce the lady. In this pleasant and easy solution to domestic matters, Bluff King Hal reckoned without his wife's Spanish pride, her European relatives, and the conscience of Christendom.

The fact that the king's "great matter," as Henry's divorce was referred to in the chanceries of Europe, took six interminable years to run its course is evidence not so much that Henry had the patience of Job but that the pace of diplomacy in the sixteenth century was leisurely in the extreme. The world of the Renaissance still thought in terms of distances that took weeks and months to cover, and foreign policies were implemented by ambassadors who spent a large portion of their waking hours jogging along painfully on sluggish mules. Diplomatically, London and Paris were at best a two-day journey apart, and during the winter months official dispatches might take over four weeks to get through. Madrid and Rome were more than a fortnight distant, and in 1603, couriers took three days, riding at breakneck speed, to

carry dispatches bearing the news of Elizabeth's death to Edinburgh, where her expectant heir, James, was awaiting them.

The fastest, but at times the most dangerous, mode of transportation was by sea, and Mediterranean galleys, stroked by countless slaves and helped along by a favorable breeze, might achieve 125 miles a day. The great galleons, propelled only by sail, were considerably slower, but they could still outdistance equestrian travelers who attained at most eighty-five miles a day: The great disadvantage of ocean travel lay in contrary winds, high waves, and unpredictable currents. At the Strait of Gibraltar, for instance, where the Atlantic rushes into the Mediterranean at a rate of five to six knots an hour, ships sometimes had to wait weeks for a wind strong enough to carry them into the Atlantic. No matter the urgency, news traveled at a pace unimaginably slow.

Early sixteenth-century Europe was composed of six major powers, all claiming the special attention of the deity but none allowing spiritual concerns to interfere seriously with questions of state. There was Henry of England, who proudly bore the title of Defender of the Faith; Francis I, the Most Christian King of France; His Holiness, the pope, possessed of the keys to the kingdom of heaven; Suleiman, the sultan of the Ottoman empire, caliph of all true believers; and finally Charles V, who was both emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and His Most Catholic Majesty of Spain. Of all the sovereigns of Europe, Emperor Charles and the Sultan Suleiman were the most powerful. The Great Suleiman had penetrated "the bulwark of Christendom," overrun Hungary, razed the Christian churches of Buda, replacing them with mosques, and slain in battle the emperor's brother-in-law, the twenty-year-old King of Hungary. Six times, Suleiman had led his armies to the gates of Vienna. Yet the sultan's successes were in large measure based not on his own strength but on his opponent's weakness. For Charles's ramshackle empire imposed on him so many obligations that he could never marshal his full military potential against the forces of the infidel.

Charles's vast domain was the result of dynastic accident and was historic proof of the effectiveness of the maxim by which his ancient dynasty, the Hapsburgs, lived: "Others make war

but you, happy Austria, make marriages." From his paternal grandfather, the Emperor Maximilian, Charles inherited the Hapsburg possessions in Austria and the Low Countries. Through his mother, mad Joanna, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, he was heir to the kingdom of Spain and the riches of the New World. The imperial dignity to which he was elected in 1519, the military might of the Spanish infantry, the wealth of the silver mines of Peru, and the economic prosperity of the Netherlands were united under a single hand, and Charles was told in all seriousness that God had placed him "on the road to universal monarchy," raising him above all other kings and princes. The imperial shepherd discovered, however, that for every sheep he gathered into the fold there lurked a wolf outside. Each new title burdened Charles with added obligations and brought him new opponents.

The emperor was never able to isolate his enemies, to crush the Lutheran heretics in Germany, to curb the independence of the great princes of his empire, to surround and destroy Valois France, and to expel the forces of Allah from Europe. Charles spent a lifetime preserving the status quo, fighting delaying actions, and hurrying from Milan to Antwerp and back to Madrid in an effort to save what he had inherited. In one area alone was he successful: The kings of France, who had been attempting to extend their domain into Italy, were thrown out of the country, and the whole peninsula fell under imperial domination. This turned out to be of supreme importance to the success of Henry's "great matter," for only the Roman pontiff could grant the divorce, and Clement VII had become, in effect, the emperor's chaplain.

Unfortunately for Henry, the wife he wanted to divorce was the aunt of the man who controlled the wealth of the Indies, the markets of the Netherlands, the armies of Spain, and the conscience of the pope. Worse still, middle-aged Catherine proved to be something more than a dowdy spouse with spreading hips and domestic tastes, content to count her sovereign's laundry and preside over his household. Beneath a placid surface lay hidden the furious pride and unbending obstinacy of her Iberian blood. The queen was, as she reminded her royal husband, "no English woman but a Spaniard born," and she set her heart and soul against any idea of a divorce. Henry might have as many concubines as he desired, but no common lady in waiting would ever replace

her as rightful queen, and no child of sin would displace her daughter as legal heir to the Tudor throne. Humility and loyalty were the words of her motto, but Henry quickly learned that her humility was for God, her loyalty to her blood. In her determination to thwart her husband's matrimonial plans, she called upon the formidable influence of her family and the dynastic pride of her powerful nephew, the Emperor Charles.

For six years, Henry applied persuasion and coercion to his wife and used all the weapons of diplomacy on Charles and Clement VII, but by 1532, time and patience were running out. In September, Anne Boleyn's resistance gave way, having been substantially weakened by her elevation to the peerage as marchioness of Pembroke, with an annual income of 1,000 pounds. By December, she was pregnant, and on January 25, 1533, Anne and Henry were secretly married. If the child was to be legitimate and the father saved from bigamy, only seven months remained in which to secure the divorce from Catherine.

From January on, the pace of events quickened, culminating in a religious revolution. The archbishop of Canterbury had recently died and in his place was appointed Thomas Cranmer, a Cambridge don who had been one of the king's strongest supporters in his efforts to obtain a divorce from Catherine. With Cranmer's elevation to the see of Canterbury, the shape of revolutionary things to come was clearly revealed, but a frightened pope, still anxious to placate Henry though unwilling to grant him a divorce, blessed the appointment; and the new archbishop was legally installed in March 1533. Cranmer was ready and willing to grant the king a divorce himself, but any decision rendered in the archbishop's court would be subject to review and possible reversal in Rome. In April, therefore, the irrevocable step was finally taken; by the Act in Restraint of Appeals the legal fabric binding England to Rome was cut and the court of the archdiocese of Canterbury decreed to be the highest spiritual forum for Englishmen. In May, Henry was requested to appear before a tribunal of his own kingdom, presided over by Cranmer, a prelate of his own creation. The decision, in the king's favor, surprised no one; Henry was now free to announce publicly his marriage to Anne and to crown her queen on June 1, 1533. The stage had been prepared with studied care, new statutes had been passed and old laws

violated, a Spanish queen had been sacrificed, and an English one created, all in anticipation of the birth of a legitimate male heir. It was almost too much to endure when on September 7, 1533, the prince born to Anne Boleyn turned out to be Elizabeth Tudor.

The Catholic world guffawed and perceived evidence of divine judgment; Anne was despondent and Henry indignant at this trick of fate. Comfort, however, could be taken from the fact that the child was healthy and the new queen fertile, and the forty-two-year-old monarch had no doubts about his own fecundity. More children would certainly follow. The immediate problem was to complete the break with Rome and create a Church of England that would be independent of the pope but not of the king. The new ecclesia had to be free of foreign interference, and more important, all its authority and fiscal perquisites had to be transferred to the crown. By the second Act of Annates, in 1534, the financial links with Rome were severed, and Church revenues were redirected into the royal coffers. New legislation gave Henry the right to make all ecclesiastical appointments, and in November 1534, the constitutional revolution reached its climax in the Act of Supremacy, whereby the king assumed the title of Supreme Head on Earth of the Church of England. Henry became, in his own memorable words, "pope, king, and emperor" in England.

Transfer, not reform, was the theme of the English Reformation. The Vicar of Christ at Rome had been displaced by God's lieutenant on earth in London. The revenues, powers, and privileges of His Holiness had been conferred upon His Majesty, the sovereign King of England. The Church of England remained Catholic and orthodox, for the man who assumed the mantle of spiritual authority was no heretic. All of "his devout subjects" were "as obedient, devout, Catholic, and humble children of God and the Holy Church as any people be within any realm of Christendom." Henry had abolished the pope but not popery, and those who desired to see the reform of the Church after the transfer of papal authority from the Vatican to Westminster were disappointed. They suspected, and with some justification, that, as one Protestant said, "the rich treasures, the rich income of the Church, these are the gospel according to Harry." In doctrine and in many of its forms, Henry's Church was still thoroughly Catholic. Canon law remained valid, spiritual violators were

put to public penance, the Church's power to excommunicate was still held in awe, ecclesiastical courts continued to hear divorce cases and handle the probation of wills, and the archbishop of Canterbury retained authority to grant special dispensations for those who infringed upon the laws of God. The only change was that the source of all of this authority was now the king and not the pope.

Henry had achieved the means to his end, but the end itself - a legitimate male heir - continued to elude him. His situation at home was eased in January 1536, when Catherine died, probably of heart disease, although it is possible she was murdered. Henry's reaction was to thank God and to make much of the infant princess Elizabeth. He celebrated his wife's death by holding a court ball, which he attended "clad all in yellow from top to toe." Though much was made of the royal infant, time was running out, for Anne Boleyn was proving to be as unproductive of male heirs as her predecessor had been. Again the king was touched in his conscience for fear that his second marriage was displeasing to God. Proof of divine wrath seemed manifest when on January 29, Anne miscarried a baby boy, supposedly after she found her husband in the embraces of one of her maids in waiting, the demure and affable Jane Seymour. By May, the queen had been accused of high treason and adultery; on May 19, she was executed, and eleven days later, Henry married Jane Seymour. On October 12, 1537, the king was granted his wish, for the new queen fulfilled her nuptial vows and gave birth to Prince Edward. The heir, however, was born at a price; in twelve days, Queen Jane was dead.

The old king was to marry thrice more, once for reasons of diplomacy, once for love, and once to find a companion in his advancing years and a nurse to his diseased and dying body; but with Edward, the number of his children was complete — Catholic and Spanish Mary, Protestant and English Elizabeth, sickly and legitimate Edward. In the end, Henry willed his throne as if no breath of scandal had touched his dynasty: first to Edward, then to Mary, and finally to Elizabeth, and if the children of his own body should die without issue, the crown was bequeathed to the offspring of his younger sister Mary, Duchess of Suffolk.

Throughout Henry's reign, the tide of religious passion in England and Europe had been steadily rising, engulfing

Christendom in the strife and bloodshed of sectarian discord. With almost apocalyptic speed, Lutheran ideas spread, breeding social and spiritual revolution. By 1547, Prussia, Denmark, Sweden, and Brandenburg had gone over to the new heresy, while England was schismatic and the Netherlands and northern France were hearkening to the stern word of God as revealed by John Calvin. The fact that reform spoke not with a single voice but in a babble of warring tongues, each claiming a monopoly of the truth, was of little comfort to men of the old school who bewailed the existence of so much error in the world. Every new Protestant faction seemed more quarrelsome and sententious than the one before. Luther at Wittenberg, Martin Bucer at Strasbourg, Huldrych Zwingli at Zurich, Calvin at Geneva, and the Anabaptists at Münster thundered militant threats at Rome and at each other. In every country, the leadership of the Protestant movement seemed to be falling into the hands of fervent and aggressive reformers, who sought not to countenance society but to remodel it into a community of saints.

In England, Henry faced a growing and exultant minority of saints, righteous in their spiritual strength and adamant in their stand against evil, who saw the break with Rome as a prelude to the establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth. To such men, the pope was the devil's disciple and the Roman Church was the "painted whore of Babylon." In their stern eyes, the popery that remained in the Church of England was as pernicious as the pope, and the cry went up to "get rid of the poison with the author." As long as Henry lived, the call went unheeded, but at his death, England was caught in a religious maelstrom.

Princess Elizabeth was thirteen when her father died in the early morning of January 8, 1547, and the control of the state passed to her brother, a precocious child of nine, and to his naive but well-meaning uncle, Edward Seymour, the Duke of Somerset. The princess's formal education as a woman of the Renaissance was the work of tutors appointed by her father, but her training in statecraft commenced the day the old king died. Under Edward and Mary, Elizabeth learned exactly what it meant to be a Tudor heir and how true was the saying: "Slippery is the place next to kings." Elizabeth's miraculous achievements in later years in restraining religious passions and preserving the unity of her realm were an outgrowth of

her experiences during the tragic reigns of her brother and older sister. A decade of indecent Protestant fanaticism under Edward and Catholic bigotry under Mary demonstrated to her what unrestrained religious hatred and social violence could do to the kingdom.

The man most responsible for the failure of Edward VI's reign was Edward Seymour, Lord Protector of the realm and governor of the king's person. The new *alter rex* endeavored to substitute reason and tolerance for the old king's draconian measures, and as a result, the country came close to being torn to pieces. The moment the government indicated its willingness to discard Henry's *via media* of Catholicism without the pope, the clamor for religious revolution rose. The alehouse and the tavern, the royal household and the bishop's palace became the arenas of religious strife, where the holy Mass was referred to as a jack-in-the-box and the time-honored words spoken at the consecration of the host - *Hoc est corpus* - were translated as "hocus-pocus."

Edward Seymour tried to solve the problem by demanding a massive and comprehensive religious conformity. The Book of Common Prayer of 1549 tried to satisfy all factions and ended by alienating them, for it obscured the central issue of dispute: whether the Mass was a ceremony in which the body and blood of Christ were actually present and resacrificed for the benefit of mankind or whether it was a commemorative service recalling Christ's sacrifice and redemption. Written by Archbishop Cranmer and reflecting the richness of his language and the softness of his compromise, the prayer book was a literary masterpiece but a religious debacle. It irritated reformers, who insisted that in religion it was "more proper to call a spade a spade than to throw ambiguous expressions before posterity," and it drove the conservative shires of southern England into open revolt, with the peasants calling for a return to the good old days they had enjoyed under Henry VIII.

The Lord Protector was no more successful at satisfying the ambitions of his family than in uniting his sovereign's kingdom. Edward Seymour had a younger brother, Thomas, "fierce in courage, courtly in fashion, in personage stately, in voice magnificent, but somewhat empty in matter." While the elder brother was aloof and tactless, the younger was ruthless and charming; while the Lord Protector had

greatness, title, and wealth thrust upon him, Thomas Seymour had been left with the crumbs of high office - Lord High Admiral of England. Thomas was critical of his brother's policies, covetous of his authority, and infuriated by the lordly bearing of a man who was his own flesh and blood. The Lord Admiral's ambitions were built upon his personal magnetism, his charm with the ladies, and his way with small boys, especially young Edward VI. He offered himself as a suitable husband for either Elizabeth or Mary, and when the king's Council dismissed the suggestion he secretly married the dowager queen, Catherine Parr.

His wife did not long survive her nuptials, dying in childbirth a year and a half later. Thomas next cast his net at Elizabeth, and Edward IV. The way to the king's heart was through his pocket money; Thomas tried to turn him against his other uncle by telling Edward that the Lord Protector had kept him "a very beggarly king" and had treated him like a small boy. To Elizabeth, he made advances even while Catherine lived, entering her bedchamber in nightgown and bare legs to romp with his wife's royal stepdaughter. After Catherine's death, the romping took on more serious overtones, and Thomas again began to hint at marriage.

What Thomas's ultimate plans were - kidnapping the king, replacing his brother, leading an insurrection, or marrying Elizabeth - remain a mystery. The results, however, were clear: The Lord Admiral was destroyed, and eventually his brother was too, and Elizabeth's life was placed in jeopardy. To avoid being suspected of involvement in his brother's indiscretions, the Lord Protector was forced to act; on January 17, 1549, he ordered Thomas's arrest. A full-scale investigation was conducted into the relationship between the Lord Admiral and Elizabeth, and the princess was grimly reminded that "she was but a subject." If nothing else, the future queen learned discretion, and when Thomas Seymour was executed in March, she remarked: "This day died a man of much wit and very little judgment."

The death of the Lord Admiral was a prelude to the fury of factional discord and backstairs politics that swept the Lord Protector from his office in 1549 and then, two years later, to the execution block. In 1550, a palace revolution took place, and Seymour's rival, John Dudley, the Earl of Warwick and later the Duke of Northumberland, seized control of the

Council and the king's person. Historians have rarely had a good word to say about Northumberland. Although he was a Catholic by conviction, he was a ruthless Protestant by politics. Under the duke, full-scale plunder of the ecclesia began, and extreme Calvinistic Protestantism was officially fostered. Religious reformers and tough court politicians had one idea in common: Clerical wealth and property were harmful to the spiritual vigor and purity of God's Church. Pious sentiment and economic self-interest made it highly desirable to relieve the bishops of as many lordships as possible. Northumberland, therefore, found it profitable to support the extreme Protestant position: The Mass was purely a commemorative service, priests were teachers of morality and the Bible, altars should be replaced by tables, and the Church should be returned to its pristine ceremonial purity. By the new ordinal of 1550, the divinely ordained priest became a parson appointed by the government, and in 1552, the wind of religious change reached gale force with the issuance of a revised version of the 1549 prayer book, which ended any pretense at compromise with Catholicism.

How long a worried realm, still attached to the ancient ritual and outward trappings of Catholicism, would have tolerated doctrinaire radicalism in religion and the brazen plundering of the Church is difficult to surmise, for in 1553, the rock on which Northumberland's power rested turned to sand. He was suddenly informed by the royal doctors that Edward VI was dying of consumption and had less than six months to live. The duke had tied his star to a priggish, humorless, and desperately ill monarch who had never had a chance to live a normal childhood, and to an advanced variety of Protestantism popular in London and almost nowhere else. Northumberland was feared but not loved, not even by reformers who saw him as "an intrepid soldier of Christ." In the face of Catholic Mary, who was the next in line of succession, he embarked upon the desperate gamble of king-making. The Tudor throne was too strong to usurp, but Northumberland hoped that the succession could be altered and Henry's will set aside. He convinced the dying Edward to strike a blow for God, and incidentally for Northumberland, by declaring Princess Mary to be illegitimate and by willing his imperial crown to Lady Jane Grey, the granddaughter of Henry VIII's sister Mary and the duke's own daughter-in-law.

The night of Edward's death was dark and stormy, and men

whispered that Henry's grave at Windsor had cracked open and that the old king had risen up in ghostly wrath against those who dared upset his will. Northumberland's desperate calculations reckoned without the loyalty that the Tudor dynasty had gathered to itself. When Edward, "tormented by constant sleeplessness" and spewing forth sputum, "livid, black, fetid, and full of carbon," finally died, England rallied to Catholic Mary, who claimed her throne by rightful inheritance. Forsaken by the Council in London and by his own army, the Duke of Northumberland surrendered and even went so far as to apologize for the arrogant presumption that had led him to defy the divinity of kings and the will of Henry VIII.

Mary was a Catholic, but she was also a Tudor, and except in the austere and jaundiced eyes of a Protestant minority, she was of unimpeachable descent, claiming her throne by parliamentary statute and divine succession. She was her father's daughter, which was sufficient for most men, and though John Knox, safe in the Calvinist citadel in Geneva, thundered against the "monstrous regiment of women," Englishmen were willing to risk a woman, even a Catholic one, on the throne in order to avoid undergoing again the nightmare of factionalism, strife, and the "dolorous experience of the inconstant government" that they had suffered for five years during the reign of King Edward.

With the forces of factionalism utterly destroyed and the Duke of Northumberland safely in the Tower, Mary insisted, as her father had before her, that all her subjects subscribe to the same faith, to be followed "for life and death." The new monarch was no daughter of the Renaissance. The soft glow of Catholic humanism had long since blistered and died in the face of Mary's Spanish pride and granite conviction. Mary joined the dogged determination of Catherine of Aragon with Henry Tudor's ruthlessness and intelligence, yet she lacked her mother's compassion and her father's tact and magnetism. The combination was disastrous, for the new queen came to the throne with a single mission: to return her errant realm to the Roman fold. Of all the Tudors, it was Mary who listened most to the small voice of conscience.

The arrival upon the throne of a neurotic thirty- seven-year-old maiden was dangerous enough; what made matters more serious was that the Church that Mary so desperately desired to restore was, in 1553, no longer the same institution that

her father had defied and discarded two decades earlier. The fires of Protestant heresy had purged the comfortable but corrupt papacy of Clement VII. Revenge, recantation, and purgation were the order of the day, and conservative churchmen who had been imprisoned under Edward VI came out of the Tower upon Mary's accession determined that reformers would soon discover "their sweet shall not be without sour sauce."

It proved relatively easy for the government to achieve the first steps in undoing the Reformation, and the clock was quickly turned back to the days of Henry VIII. In October 1553, the Edwardian spiritual reformation was destroyed as it had been created, by act of Parliament. An anxious and willing House of Commons reversed the divorce of Catherine of Aragon, absolved the new queen of bastardy, repealed the Edwardian acts of uniformity and the statutes that had reformed church furnishings, ceremonies, and the nature of the Mass. England returned to the Henrician *via media* of Catholicism, without the pope.

Mary could go no further than this, however, for Parliament refused to go along with her. Two barriers yet remained to block the return to Rome - the Act of Supremacy, in which Parliament had acknowledged the prince as the Supreme Head on Earth of the Church of England and the fate of the monastic lands that had been nationalized under Henry VIII. To Mary, her spiritual title was a burning crown upon her head, the work of Satan; yet Parliament politely but firmly declined to discharge the queen from her duties as supreme head or make it legally possible to recognize the authority of Rome until the ultimate fate of the monastic lands had been decided. Reflecting the interests of the landed classes, Commons refused any religious settlement that involved a return of the monastic lands to the Church. The soul's salvation would have to wait upon political considerations. Only after the Church lands had been secured for their new owners by statutory decree was Parliament willing, in 1554, to repeal the antipapal legislation of Henry's reign and to petition for reunion with Rome and spiritual absolution for the kingdom.

In foreign policy as well as in religion, Mary was determined to cast out time and return to the conditions that had made possible the marriage of her Spanish mother and Tudor

father. She set her royal heart upon marrying her cousin, the son and heir to the Hapsburg possessions, young Philip of Spain. Times, however, had changed, and English and Spanish imperial interests were rapidly parting company. Spain, not France, was emerging as the colossus of the world, the arbiter of Europe, and England's commercial competitor in the Mediterranean and Caribbean. Against the bitter opposition of the public, Parliament, and the Privy Council, Mary insisted on the marriage, and in July 1554, Prince Philip became co-ruler of England.

The queen had her way, but even before the marriage, she learned that a large and vocal segment of the population refused to follow her lead. Kent rose up against the prospects of a Roman faith and an alien king. Led by Sir Thomas Wyatt, some 3,000 men from Kent came as close as any rebels ever did to upsetting the Tudor throne. The revolt proved conclusively that London was the heart of England and the bastion of Tudor rule. Mary followed the advice of the Spanish ambassador, who warned her that "if you value your crown stay in London, for once you leave Elizabeth will be queen, and the true religion thrown out." Wyatt knocked at the gates of the city, but when most of the populace, including even the Protestants, remained loyal to the daughter of Henry Tudor, his forces evaporated. He ended his career where other critics of the Tudor throne had - on the execution block.

Two other victims were beheaded along with the leaders of this ill-starred venture. Lady Jane Grey, Northumberland's nine-day puppet-queen, and her husband paid the price of Wyatt's treason. The depth of the queen's mercy had been sounded, and Mistress Grey could not be forgiven a second time for her heretical faith and proximity to the throne. Elizabeth's fate hung by the slenderest thread of sisterly affection, and for a moment, it looked as if the logic of realpolitik would prevail. The princess as heir presumptive was too dangerous to live, and the Spanish ambassador put his finger on the insecurity that surrounded Elizabeth's life when he noted that she was "greatly to be feared; she has a spirit full of incantation." Every effort was made to connect her with Wyatt's rebellion, and she was ordered to the Tower for safekeeping while her future was being decided. As she was being conducted through Traitor's Gate and up the stairs from the river into the fortress, Elizabeth suddenly sat down and refused to go farther. The lord lieutenant of the Tower

appealed to her sense of dignity and said: "You had best come in, Madam, for here you sit unwholesomely." The princess answered with a simple truth: "Better sit here than in a worse place." In the end, she sat in a worse place for three months, and such was her hopelessness that she resigned herself to death and requested only that the sword be sharp and the executioner be French, for French executioners were considered most proficient. What saved Elizabeth was the queen's compassion and Philip's realization that should his wife die childless, he would have a better chance of maintaining his diplomatic hold over England as Elizabeth's brother-in-law and prospective husband than as a bystander impotently watching the struggle for succession that would inevitably follow her death. The Spanish king was never one to forget the advice: "Wary is the man who assures his own retreat."

The year 1555 was the turning point of Mary's reign. During her first three years, the queen had hoped that spiritual absolution and the return to Rome would bring peace of mind to her people, and that marriage to Philip would perpetuate the Tudor dynasty in the Catholic faith. The last twenty-four months of her reign brought nothing but disillusionment, despair, and defeat, and earned for Mary the infamous epithet of "Bloody." To her sorrow, the queen realized that godliness and loving kindness were not sufficient to lead her flock back into the bosom of the Church. Laws would have to be written in blood; heresy would have to be put to the torch; early in 1555, the Smithfield fires were lighted. The first victims were few - Cranmer, Ridley, Hooper, Latimer, and two others - in the expectation that the terrible fate of the leaders of Protestantism would silence the voice of heresy. Mary's government, however, badly miscalculated the faith that sustained the Protestant martyrs. It failed to realize the strength of mind and body that led Hugh Latimer to turn to Nicholas Ridley as they stood chained to the stake and say: "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out." The death of the Protestant leaders showed not so much the horrors of incineration as the path to glory and gave others the strength to play the man.

Responsibility for burning 300 Protestant martyrs must ultimately rest upon the conscience of humanity, for the explanation, if not the justification, resides in the spirit of an

age that believed that "there can not be a greater work of cruelty against the commonwealth than to nourish or favor [heretics] . . . who, as it were, undermining the chief foundation of all commonwealths, which is religion, make an entry to all kinds of vice in the most heinous manner." Protestants and Catholics alike viewed heresy as an insidious social disease that could not only destroy the soul but also lead men into rebellion and perdition. Purgation by fire was the deplorable but accepted method of dealing with the problem.

No matter how hard she labored, Mary had not won "the favor of God, nor the hearts of her subjects, nor yet the love of her husband." Her marriage was a travesty, barren of love as well as of children. The queen was wedded to a husband who regarded his matrimonial vows as a matter of diplomatic convenience and demanded that his wife prove her affection by leading England into war with France on the side of Spain. Dutifully, Mary dragooned her subjects into a war for which they were militarily unequipped and emotionally unprepared. The consequences were almost as disastrous as her religious policy. The memory of Agincourt and Crécy were blackened by defeat when the city of Calais, the last English possession in France, was lost in January 1558. It is alleged that Mary said on her deathbed that if her heart were opened up her doctors would find the word *Calais* written across it. The unrelieved tragedy of her reign, however, was not the loss of Calais, whose importance was mostly symbolic, nor the loss of her husband's love, which she had never really possessed, nor even the sterility of her loins; it was her dreadful and gradual realization that righteous intent does not necessarily prevail over evil. As Mary lay dying on November 16, 1558 - Hope Wednesday, her subjects called the day - she must have known that although she had shown the way, England had obstinately failed to follow. It now remained to be seen whether the realm would follow the last of Henry's children - Queen Elizabeth.

III

THE CALM AND QUIET SEASON

The bells that sounded and the fires that blazed on that dark evening of November 17, 1558, bespoke England's relief that Catholic Mary, worn out by sickness and embittered by failure, was mercifully dead. Yet "the darksome clouds of discomfort" appeared as black as ever and Englishmen "went about their matters as men amazed that wist not where to begin or end." The kingdom had floundered for more than a decade, and in 1558, no one could see an end to discord, bigotry, and uncertainty. Once again the "wolves" were "coming out of Geneva and other places of Germany," where the Protestant exiles of Mary's reign had failed to learn either humility or compassion and had absorbed the acrid theological air of Calvin's Switzerland. The religious pattern of things to come remained unclear, but on one matter the soldiers of the Lord were adamant: "even the slightest vestiges of popery" had to be driven from the land and out of men's minds. Under Northumberland, desperate and ambitious men had led the kingdom to the brink of civil war, and five years of Catholic Mary had neither softened Protestant hearts nor taught them tolerance. Now, in the cold days of November, another woman, another member of that "monstrous regiment," wore the crown. Elizabeth inherited a kingdom that was humiliated in war, paralyzed by ineptitude, and sinking into spiritual and financial bankruptcy. Men predicted nothing but further agony in which Protestant zealots would replace Catholic ones, and Puritan martyrs would make way for papists. Throughout the realm, it was agreed that "our remedy must be prayer," for no other help seemed to be in sight.

That the ranks were re-formed, that new life and vitality were infused into the moribund body of the state, and that police and moderate men undertook the leadership of government were marvels that Elizabeth's own age attributed to the special intercession of God and the divine genius of their new sovereign. God and destiny loomed large in the affairs of states when France could be catapulted into two generations of religious war by the sudden death of Henry II in 1559, and England, against all prognostications, could be saved from religious fire and political dismemberment by the magic of Elizabeth's personality and the accident that she survived disease and escaped assassination for seventy years.

Elizabeth was her father's daughter: athletic, red-haired, autocratic, inordinately vain, and "of stately and majestic

deportment." Time and again her subjects saw the reflection of that iron-willed giant in the slender person of their monarch; indeed, when Londoners first beheld their queen they exclaimed, "Remember old King Henry VIII!" The Spanish ambassador immediately sensed the similarity and reported to his master that Elizabeth seems to be "incomparably more feared than her sister and gives her orders and has her way as absolutely as her father did." Later in her reign, her godson, Sir John Harington, noted the same quality and concluded that "she left no doubtings whose daughter she was." Elizabeth spent a lifetime making capital of her sex, indulging her vanity, and excusing her womanly frailty, but on one subject she never wavered: She had "the heart and stomach of a king" and she would be master in her own house. To Robert Dudley, the first of the youthful heroes of her reign who aspired to win her hand, she fulminated: "God's death! My Lord . . . I will have here but one mistress and no master." After the execution of Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex, who sought not her hand but her throne, she coldly commented: "I warned him that he should not touch my scepter."

There were many reasons why Elizabeth never married - political, sexual, historical - but an adroit Scottish ambassador may have come closest to the truth when he boldly told the queen: "Ye think that if ye were married, ye would be but Queen of England, and now ye are king and queen both. Ye may not suffer a commander." The decision to remain single was not easy; both public sentiment and political necessity rebelled at the idea of a queen who was childless and alone. John Knox had been unbending in his views on women; they were "weak, frail, impatient, feeble, and foolish," and the whole world knew them to be "inconstant, variable, cruel, and void of the spirit of council." The sixteenth century also agreed wholeheartedly with Martin Luther when he said of the weaker sex: "Let them bear children till they die of it; that is what they are for." Though Tudor society was emphatic in its demand that the queen should marry, it was not nearly so united on the subject of a proper husband. No man in the Elizabethan age would have settled for a position secondary to that of his wife, and when the wife was queen, a husband had to be king. This was the insurmountable obstacle to marriage, and Elizabeth quickly learned from her affair with Robert Dudley that only in lonely

virginity could she ever hope to rule her jealous subjects.

Lord Robert Dudley was, as the saying went, descended from "a tribe of traitors." His grandfather had been a ruthless and despised minion of the first Tudor king; his father, the Duke of Northumberland, had tried his hand at king-making; his brother, Guildford Dudley, had married Lady Jane Grey; and each had ended his life on the execution block. Elizabeth could not have given her heart to anyone better calculated to arouse the hatred and fear of every faction at court. Young, handsome, and lusty, Lord Robert had been a friend of the princess during those perilous days under Mary, and he had been created Master of the Horse almost the moment the new reign began. Later, when the queen named him the Baron of Denbigh and the Earl of Leicester, it was noted with alarm that she tickled her young gallant's neck, and it was rumored that "Her Majesty visits him in his chamber day and night." A more sinister piece of gossip was soon spread abroad by the Spanish ambassador: Elizabeth, he said, was only waiting for Dudley's wife to die in order to marry him, and the handsome husband was scheming to hasten that moment with poison. Suddenly, on September 8, 1560, idle and malicious tongues had even more startling news to discuss: The lady in question had conveniently fallen down a flight of stairs and broken her neck. The coroner's inquest decided it was an accident, Dudley's household suspected suicide, and the world whispered murder. The scandal rattled at the foundations of Elizabeth's shaky throne. In Paris, the English ambassador could not find an answer when Parisians asked: "What religion is this, that a subject shall kill his wife, and the prince not only bear withal but marry with him?" Mary Stuart was delighted by her cousin's embarrassment and told everyone: "The Queen of England is going to marry her horsekeeper who has killed his wife to make room for her." In England, statesmen feared that Elizabeth would prove that John Knox's dreary evaluation of womankind was, indeed, correct.

During the winter of 1560, Elizabeth stormed and stamped, threatening marriage one moment and disdaining it the next; but she quickly began to perceive that although her position as a maiden and barren queen might be dangerous, it was still safer than marriage to a man who would stir every court clique to violence and insist upon all his husbandly prerogatives. To Gloriana's "stately stomach" marriage was incompatible with sovereignty, and though Dudley always

remained her "Robin," he had to make do with the title of Earl of Leicester.

The miracle of Gloriana's reign, as one seventeenth-century observer wrote, was the queen's ability "to gain obedience thus without constraint." In more modern phraseology, it was the extraordinary fashion in which Elizabeth got her own way without a standing army, without a clear and absolute title to her throne, and without even being the right sex. She was coarse, vulgar, bawdy, and extroverted. She spat and picked her teeth and swore great "mouth- filling oaths." She boxed her ministers' ears and threw slippers at them in her rage, and her councilors so despaired of her ever making up her mind that they turned to prayer and the hope of miracles as England's only recourse. She could be exasperating, officious, and meddlesome; she corrected her councilors' reports, criticized their Latin, and drove the long-suffering Sir Francis Walsingham, her principal secretary, into complaining: "I would to God Her Majesty could be content to refer these things to them that can best judge of them, as other princes do." She believed in astrology, clairvoyance, and black magic; her temper was uncertain, her wit cruel, and her tongue razor-edged; and as she aged, her nose, "somewhat rising in the midst," grew hooked as a harridan's, her sharp eyes turned dim and nearsighted, her red hair faded and gave way to a wig, and her teeth decayed and blackened.

Elizabeth took every advantage of her sex and sovereignty to indulge her wit and sarcasm, and not even the wife of the archbishop of Canterbury was immune from her barbed and royal tongue. The queen disliked clerical marriages on principle, and after a visit to Lambeth Palace she thanked Archbishop Parker's wife with the words: "Madam I may not call you; mistress I am ashamed to call you, so I know not what to call you; but yet I thank you." When she discovered herself to be the subject of a sermon on the sins of vanity and costly dress, she turned to her maids in waiting and said of the presumptuous ecclesiastic that if he "held more discourse on such matters," she would "fit him for heaven - but he would walk thither without a staff and leave his mantle behind him." Of the two men who probably knew her best during the autumn of her life, one, the devious Robert Cecil, concluded that the queen was "more than a man, and (in truth) sometimes less than a woman," and the other, the Earl of Essex, raged that she was "cankered, and her mind as

crooked as her carcass."

Yet behind the façade of gaudy vulgarity, shallow egotism, and feminine caprice, there lay toughness of mind, innate caution, deep humility, and unmatched magnetism, for "when she smiled, it was a pure sunshine." Few monarchs ever worked at royalty as hard as did Elizabeth. The ceaseless ceremony, the endless interviews, and the exhausting spectacles, in which the queen was always the central figure, were integral parts of her role as sovereign. Her ministers complained of overwork, yet William Cecil, Lord Burghley, her chief councilor, admitted that it was Gloriana herself who "knew all estates and dispositions of all princes and parties." Courtiers were dismayed by the boundless energy that not only kept their queen dancing to tabor and pipe at the age of sixty-six but also allowed her to endure the rigors of a royal progress through the realm. When some of her entourage complained, she bade "the old stay behind, and the young and able" go along with her.

The queen knew the business of kingship. She had a marvelous memory, kept meticulous notes, and was never frightened or bored by details, especially when they concerned shillings and pence. She knew that "the greatest clerks are not the wisest men," and though she could never abide a fool, Elizabeth sensed that even the wisest man is not without his folly. With unerring eye, she recognized the worth of a good servant. Her judgment of those who served her was rarely in error, even though a winning smile and a well-turned calf could gain her indulgence. On occasion Elizabeth "would set the reason of a mean man before the authority of the greatest councilor she had," and she never forgot the basis on which she first selected William Cecil as her principal secretary. "This judgment I have of you," she had said to him, "that you will not be corrupted with any manner of gift, and that you will be faithful to the state, and that without respect of my private will, you will give me that counsel that you think best." In lonely pre-eminence the queen learned the trade of royalty and in anguish wrote:

I grieve; and dare not show my discontent!

I love; and yet am forced to seem to hate!

I do; yet dare not say, I ever meant!

Elizabeth was nothing if not a realist, rarely allowing passion to overshadow wisdom and always looking "into things as they are." She could couple mildness with majesty, and she never hesitated to stoop to conquer. Instinctively, she realized that in government the line between good and evil, honesty and corruption, was not always clear. She knew herself for what she was, a child "of corrupt seed" and "a most frail substance" living in a "world of wickedness, where delights be snares." The queen was the first to admit she was no angel, for her sins were manifold, and in the quiet of her chapel, she even confessed the possibility that she was "unworthy of eternal life, if not of the royal dignity."

Elizabeth could be ridiculous, deceitful, and vindictive, but her humor, humility, and self-criticism saved her from becoming vicious and monstrous. She gave God credit for pulling her "from the prison to the palace," and she confessed her "ignorance in this my calling" and her "need of good advice and counsel." To God she was thankful and to men she was merciful, for the queen knew from youthful experience that all men are fortune's playthings and that in the bloody game of politics, "my lot today, tomorrow may be thine." Throughout her life, Elizabeth had a sense of mission, for she believed that God and time were on her side. At her coronation, she looked about her at the splendor of the occasion and whispered, "Time has brought me hither." Delay, procrastination, reconsideration were her greatest assets, for the queen was a past master of the art of biding her time. Early in her reign, her ambassador to France, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, warned her to walk warily and allow no party or faction to understand fully what she had in mind. Elizabeth needed no such advice, for she intuitively sensed that watchfulness, finesse, secrecy, and prudence were her surest political weapons. Presiding over a court filled with quarrelsome, hotheaded children who posed as heroic adults and were always more willing to pay back "wrongs than good turns," and living in an age of international hypertension, Elizabeth saw that in politics, problems are rarely solved; they are only replaced by other, more pressing ones. Given time, men and nations could be led into forgetfulness. The dramatic moments of her reign - the beheading of Mary Queen of Scots, the defeat of the Armada, and the execution of Essex - were events thrust upon her by circumstances.

Left to herself, Elizabeth almost always elected half-

measures and delays in preference to rash solutions and impetuous actions. She was a thoroughly conservative female who shied away from newfangledness in religion, in politics, and in science. Legend reports that Gloriana did not even take kindly to that most dangerous of mechanical devices, the flush toilet, and though she thanked its inventor, she preferred more tried-and-true methods of sanitation. Without royal support, the contraption died out in England and had to be reinvented 175 years later.

Elizabeth gloried in her nationality; she was, as she boasted, "mere English" and was confident that her subjects were all on her side, which the Spanish ambassador admitted was, indeed, true. "She was queen of the small as well as the great," and if there was a secret to her success, it lay, as her courtier Sir Christopher Hatton said, in the fact that "the queen did fish for men's souls, and had so sweet a bait that no one could escape her network." Robert Dudley was not only her "Sweet Robin" but also her "Eyes," William Cecil her "Spirit," Hatton her "Mutton" and "Bellwether," Francis Walsingham her "Moor," and Robert Cecil her "Pygmy." She caught each "poor fish," Hatton continued, "who little knew what snare was laid" for him.

Gloriana wooed and won her people because she was in tune with the spirit of her generation. If Mary belonged to a dying past, Elizabeth was at home in a dynamic present. If one sister was consumed by the bright flame of conscience, the other held to the glorious and brilliant standards of the Renaissance in which calculation displaced conviction, virtuosity was praised more highly than beatitude, and beardless boys carved out their kingdoms in the sky and proclaimed to the world what "bliss was it in that dawn to be alive." No finer tribute to her achievement was ever written than the verse that was inscribed on dishes and was scribbled by schoolboys in the margins of their textbooks:

> The rose is red, the leaves are green.
>
> God save Elizabeth, our noble queen.

Personality may ultimately explain the Elizabethan age, but good luck and some highly astute politics were also evident behind the steps that Elizabeth took to restore peace and order to the realm. Elizabeth had one advantage: Though a

woman, only other women could make claim to her throne. Catherine and Mary, sisters of Lady Jane Grey, were hardly serious contenders, and Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots and Henry VIII's grandniece, was the wife of the young dauphin of France and consequently tied by marriage and sympathy to England's traditional enemy. Though good Catholics loudly denounced Elizabeth as a usurper and a bastard, most of her subjects accepted her as Henry's lawful daughter and heir; and her brother-in-law, Philip of Spain, defended her rights at Rome against the voice of France that urged the pope to declare her a heretic with no legal title to her crown. Spain preferred an English queen of somewhat doubtful religious conviction to a devout Catholic monarch controlled by the Valois interests of France. That Elizabeth in part owed the peaceful succession of her throne to Philip II would become within a decade the grand irony of both their lives.

Once acknowledged queen, Elizabeth turned to men of moderation, regardless of their faith, as the prop and stay of her reign. Her Council was reduced from forty-four men to fewer than twenty and purged of its episcopal members, for Elizabeth preferred laymen as her associates in government. In part, the secular spirit of her administration was a matter of taste; in part, it was the result of circumstances. As the child of Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth could be nothing except Protestant, but her faith was not the militant and burning Protestantism of the Marian exiles returning from Geneva. Instead, it was that strange spiritual mixture her father had brutally enforced on his kingdom, a muddled and headless Catholicism that insisted on outward conformity but allowed sufficient doctrinal breadth so that both Protestant and Catholic could find it acceptable. The new queen desired to open no windows into men's souls and to light no fires to consume their bodies. For Elizabeth, the essence of religion remained mystical and personal. There was, she said, "only one Christ Jesus and one faith; the rest is a dispute about trifles." Politically speaking, those trifles were highly combustible and dangerous to the state, and Elizabeth decided that the wisest course to follow was to persuade the moderates of her father's reign to undertake a second break with Rome, reintroducing Henrician Catholicism, which she regarded as the safest religious solution. In this, she signally failed.

In their salad days such men as Cuthbert Tunstall, bishop of

Durham, and Nicholas Heath, archbishop of York, had accompanied Henry VIII into schism, but under Edward VI, they had drawn the line at heresy and had resigned rather than accept the Edwardian prayer books and the Protestant doctrines they proclaimed. They had welcomed the return to Rome under Catholic Mary, and now, in 1559, they refused to oblige their new queen by sanctioning what Elizabeth demanded: independence for the Church of England, Catholicism without the pope. The episcopal conservatives had learned through bitter experience the truth of the words: "Whatever is contrary to the Catholic faith is heresy; whatever is contrary to unity is schism. . . . It is the same thing, so far as schism is concerned, to do a little or to do all."

Thwarted by the Catholic party, Elizabeth turned for religious support to those of a more Protestant and obliging nature, but she avoided the radical ideas of extremists fresh from Calvinistic Geneva, relying instead on men who had stayed in England and had bent with the wind. Her new archbishop of Canterbury personified the comfortable compromise of Elizabeth's religious settlement. Matthew Parker was no martyr. He was a loyal, obedient, and efficient servant of the crown, more interested in peaceful government than in religious purity. Parker was a scholar and an antiquarian who cultivated academic obscurity. He had, however, known the queen's mother and had been a chaplain in her house, and for these reasons, he felt honor bound to serve the daughter. Like his royal mistress, he detested the religious extravagance that was found in Geneva and Scotland, and he prayed long and loud that God might preserve the kingdom "from such a visitation as John Knox has attempted in Scotland; the people to be orderers of things."

In temporal matters as well as spiritual, the queen chose cautious men, dexterous in the ways of politics. William Cecil was to the state what Matthew Parker was to the Church. The new principal secretary had been a Protestant under Edward, a reluctant but conforming Catholic under Mary, and a politique under his new sovereign. The rise of the Cecils is a perfect sixteenth-century success story. They started out as yeomen, who through good management, good marriages, and good political judgment rose to become country gentlemen and minor officials at the court. The most famous of them, William Cecil, was born in 1520 with a passion for

hard work and an instinct for survival in the slippery warfare of Tudor politics. He received his political education under the dukes of Somerset and Northumberland, but he nimbly escaped the fate of his noble patrons. Under Mary, Cecil quietly retired to the country, but on Elizabeth's succession he became first principal secretary, then Master of the Wards, and finally, in 1572, Lord Treasurer. His reward was one of the few noble titles conferred by Elizabeth. William Cecil of yeoman stock became Baron Burghley of Stamford Burghley. "Of all men of genius," said the contemporary chronicler William Camden, "he was the most a drudge and of all men of business, the most a genius." He suited the needs of his sovereign perfectly, and he became the artful stage manager for Elizabeth's equally artful performance in the role of Gloriana. Cecil and Parker were typical of the men who succeeded in rebuilding England, working on the hypothesis that Catholics were better losers than Protestants and were more easily controlled since their devotion to the crown was greater than their sense of duty to their religion.

Throughout the long, bitter struggle to achieve religious unity and a workable doctrinal compromise, Elizabeth and her ministers never forgot Thomas Howard's warning that England would not bear yet another radical change in religion, for the kingdom had "been bowed so oft that if it should be bent again it would break." The utter confusion of four changes in religion in as many decades was revealed at Oxford. Under Edward VI, the Italian Protestant theologian Peter Martyr had been appointed canon of Christ's Church. To his new post, Martyr brought not only his learning but his wife, who died in 1552 and was buried in the cathedral. On Mary's succession, Mrs. Martyr's remains were cast out upon a dunghill in the back garden. When the queen died, the canons were eager to restore the lady to her tomb, but were filled with indecision when they discovered on the dunghill the bones of Saint Frideswide, the patron saint of Oxford, which had been discarded earlier during the reign of Edward VI. In their uncertainty, the canons wrote to Elizabeth, asking which set of bones should be honored. There is a legend that she answered with the laconic phrase: "Mix them." Whatever her exact words, an elaborate funeral was arranged, and the Catholic saint and the Protestant Mrs. Martyr were duly buried together. In honor of the occasion, one of the canons, with a fine sense of irony, caught the spirit of Elizabeth's solution to

the religious troubles of her age when he wrote:

> Papists and Protestants should now In peace abide,
>
> As here religion true and false Lie side by side.

During the spring of 1559, the Elizabethan settlement was legislated; it mixed elements of both religions in the hope that papists and Protestants would "in peace abide." It restored the royal supremacy, but softened it by styling the queen supreme governor, not head of the Church of England. The Book of Common Prayer of 1552 was reintroduced, but in a slightly modified form, with ambiguous language added to avoid defining the exact nature of the Mass. A new Act of Uniformity was passed, prescribing punishment for clergymen who refused to use the prayer book and for laymen who refused to conform to the new Church; and four years later, in 1563, the final pronouncement on what an Englishman should believe was set forth by convocation in the Thirty-Nine Articles. The old Church came to heel without a fight; the Marian bishops quietly resigned their sees, and their places on the episcopal bench were filled with men of Protestant mettle and pragmatic flexibility. Even the militant Protestants, who persisted in regarding Elizabeth's Church as the sanctuary of "dumb dogs, unskillful, sacrificing priests, destroying drones, or rather caterpillars of the Word," were silenced for the time by a queen who was quite evidently determined to be mistress in her own house.

The Elizabethan religious settlement and the ceaseless labors on the part of the queen and her servants were aimed at a single purpose: a commonwealth composed of balanced and harmonious elements in which all men would know their place and no man would hanker after what was not rightly his. Every century and every generation has its own preconceptions and habits of thought. The twentieth century talked noisily of the equality of man, but half a century before, reference to the equality of races was rarely heard, and four centuries before that, in Tudor England, the equality of man, except as a spiritual entity in the eyes of God, would have been regarded as a dangerous and preposterous supposition. The medieval concept of a great chain of being, commencing with God and working down through the hierarchy from angels and saints to men, beasts, and vegetables, was still the normal mental picture of the

universe. The system was authoritarian, hierarchical, and organic; every element played a prescribed role and contributed to the totality of the divine structure. Man's society was both a part and a mirror of this grand design. Poet and queen, statesman and courtier, all held the view of society that was recorded by Shakespeare when he wrote: "Take but degree away, untune that string, and hark! What discord follows."

Nothing stirred the sixteenth century so deeply as the thought of chaos and mutability, if only because the sight of disorder was everywhere present, and the means of suppressing treason were so pathetically inadequate. The benefits of order, degree, and balance were trumpeted from every pulpit, written into every statute, and dramatized by every playwright. Dramatists and preachers never wearied of reminding their audiences of "the sweetness of unity, the fatness and substance of religion, the wine of obedience," and the assurance that those who rebel "against the prince get unto themselves damnation." Humility was considered the chief virtue of all ranks, and subjects were expected to hearken to the advice: "We should not look at what we cannot reach, nor long for what we should not have. Things above us are not for us."

The Tudor state was constantly compared with the human body. The prince was the head that guarded the body politic from anarchy; the ministers of God were "the eyes to watch and not to wink or sleep"; the judges were the ears to hear complaints; the nobility were "the shoulders and arms to bear the burden of the commonwealth, to hold up the head, and defend the body with might and force"; and men of the lower orders were "set as inferior parts painfully to travail" for the support of those worthier than themselves. The sixteenth-century gentleman, whether he lived in Madrid, Paris, or London, had a low opinion of the many-headed mob, and one and all agreed that, except for the natural leaders of society, man was "wild, without judgment, and not of sufficient experience to govern himself." This Elizabethan concept of an ordained and paternalistic commonwealth was enshrined in the Statute of Apprentices of 1563, which required all men to remain in their birthplace and practice the same occupation as their fathers. The act was predicated on the theory that all men had a social and moral obligation to labor. It assumed the existence of a universal order, and it arrayed the major

occupations of the kingdom on a scale of utility, with agriculture ranked at the top and foreign trade at the bottom. The statute tacitly presumed that town and country, court and shire were separate but interdependent parts of the commonwealth. The structure of society was fixed and static, permitting neither a fluid labor force nor any form of social mobility; and the claims of blood, education, and land were considered ample justification for both social and political inequality.

The states of Europe were everywhere as authoritarian and totalitarian as the instruments of coercion could make them. In England, fines were levied for truancy from church on Sunday; prices, wages, and working conditions were regulated; beggars were shipped home to their parishes; and Elizabeth commanded her subjects to wear hats in order to help the felt business, and to eat fish at least two days each week in order to support the fishing industry. Spaniards were forbidden the use of all precious metal ornaments upon their clothes, and when such sumptuary legislation was ignored by the ladies of the court, Philip II tried to shame them into compliance by giving the whores of the streets the sole right to bedeck themselves in silver and silks. In Spain, ruffs were limited to two pleats, not more than three inches in width, and could be cut from white linen only. The fine for disobedience was 20,000 maravedis for the first offense; it rose to 80,000 and a year's banishment for the third. The sixteenth-century traveler was as harassed by the officiousness of bureaucrats and the actions of government officials as is any today. No one was allowed to leave England without license; passports were issued to all persons entering or leaving the kingdom; strict currency regulations were enforced. Travelers "upon pain of confiscation" could take no more than twenty pounds out of the country, and one visitor reported that each member of his party "was obliged to give his name, the reason for his visit to England, and the place to which he was going." Moreover, their valises and trunks were opened and "most diligently examined for the sake of discovering English money."

The aim of most social legislation of the century was not the welfare state, since few Elizabethans thought in terms of human well-being. The fear of social revolution induced Elizabeth as "the godly prince," and the aristocracy as the natural leaders of society to maintain an authoritarian state.

According to Sir Walter Raleigh, the gentry were "the garrisons of good order throughout the realm," and good order rested on full bellies, cheap food, steady employment, and a society that was carefully watched over by a vigilant gentry born and educated to rule.

At the apex of society stood the queen, "the life, the head, and the authority of all things that be done in the realm of England." Elizabeth was "the well-spring of all that was good and evil," the fountain of justice, the symbol of national unity, and the ultimate source of the lavish rewards that came to men in political life. Gloriana was God's anointed lieutenant on earth, and though the queen rarely bothered to mention the fact, no one, least of all Elizabeth, doubted that she was a god on earth. Elizabeth was addressed on bended knee; like her father, she was referred to by the weighty title of Your Majesty and not by the older medieval term of Your Grace; and wherever Gloriana was in residence, there was the vital center of government and the source of all political authority. To the queen's court came not only the representatives of foreign states and the suitors for her hand but also all who sought wealth, power, and renown. Like pale satellites to Gloriana's sun, statesmen and favorites, scamps and saints, heroes and bounders, financiers and vendors, patron-seekers and parasites, entertainers and educators were all pulled into the royal orbit, where they reflected the glittering light of the queen's favor.

To be banished from court was to be exiled into outer darkness, for a word spoken by the queen was worth the riches of the Indies and a favor bestowed by Her Majesty was a greater honor than the most ancient noble title in the land. The favorite or minister, who by flattery, masculinity, hard work, or ability controlled the approach to the throne, in effect, controlled the kingdom. Elizabethan politics remained personal and intimate and consisted primarily in getting oneself and one's protégés as close to the queen as possible. The prolonged duel between the Essex and Cecil factions during the last years of Elizabeth's reign was fought over the placement of friends and followers in positions at court where they could exert influence on the queen. The essential axiom of Tudor politics was not merely "out of sight out of mind," but "out of sight, in evil mind." In the end, Essex was destroyed when he was maneuvered into accepting a position away from the court, and he wrote bitterly to the Council in

London that he could defend himself "on the breast, but not on the back" from the dagger thrusts of malicious gossip.

Elizabeth's household may have been an academy of Renaissance learning, a rich and ceremonial setting for royalty, and the political heart of the kingdom; yet falsehood and greed, callousness and spitefulness were everywhere. Political morality under the queen remained almost as predatory and just as susceptible to corruption as in the past. Lord Burghley is reported to have planted a spy on Drake's ship in order to sabotage his venture; Secretary Walsingham had the queen's correspondence with her Lord Treasurer intercepted by hirelings; and all men expected tips to insure prompt service. Moralists and political failures agreed with the playwright Anthony Munday, who found that:

> . . . falsehoods sat in fairest looks
>
> And friend to friend was coy;
>
> Court favor fill'd but empty books
>
> And there I found no joy.

The court was perambulating, elaborate, and unhygienic. It included everybody from the children of the scullery and the grooms of the stool to the Lord Chamberlain and the great dignitaries of the household, possibly 1,000 persons in all. The most coveted positions, and consequently the most inaccessible, were those that permitted entrée to the queen's chamber. Like any private household, the court was divided along traditional lines - above stairs and below stairs. In the case of the queen's establishment, however, the divisions were not so fixed, for the royal household was a public institution as well as a private home. At one time, Elizabeth's ancestors had kept their treasure in chests under their beds, like any private individuals who regarded the bedchamber as the safest room in the house, and they had used their servants to aid them in their public duties. Consequently, the domestics of the household - the chamberlain, the steward, the butler, the marshal, the treasurer - evolved into state dignitaries, holding such titles as Lord Chamberlain, Lord Steward, and Lord Treasurer.

Below stairs was the preserve of the Lord Steward, who

presided over a host of court servants ranging in social and governmental importance from the Lord Treasurer, the Keeper of the Queen's Jewels, and the Clerks of the Green Cloth, to the master and apprentice cooks and the grooms of the stable. Above stairs was the domain of the Lord Chamberlain. His was a far smaller organization than the domestic staff of the Lord Steward; it was the world of the politically elite, numbering no more than 175 privileged men and a dozen women. The Lord Chamberlain attended upon the queen's person; he was responsible for the operation of her privy chamber and the organization of the ceremony that surrounded her every waking moment and lent dignity and glamour to her life; and he controlled the appointment of those influential and greatly envied officials about the queen - the wellborn grooms and yeomen of her chamber and her ladies in waiting. Of all the functionaries at court, the Lord Chamberlain was politically the most important, for his were the juiciest plums of patronage.

Outside the court and the immediate entourage of the queen, but linked closely to the royal household by overlapping personnel, was the slender structure of government through which the sovereign ruled. The Tudor bureaucracy was intimate, hardworking, and underpaid, and by modern standards incredibly small and understaffed. The mainspring of government in England, as well as in France, Spain, and elsewhere in Europe was the Council surrounding the monarch, which, wrote James I, "does watch for me when I sleep and in my absence are so careful to snip and trim the house against my return." Under Elizabeth, the Privy Council was composed of a dozen or more ministers, who managed the realm "as if it had been the household and estate of a nobleman under a strict and prying steward." The Council handled foreign affairs, drafted official communiqués, issued proclamations that had the authority of law, and scrutinized and regulated every facet of Tudor life. County officials, such as justices of the peace, chief constables, sheriffs, and lord lieutenants were appointed and supervised by the Council in the queen's name. The price of wheat, the level of wages, the drainage of rivers, the apprehension of criminals, the supervision of the shire militia, the construction of bridges, the petitions of soldiers and sailors grown old and infirm in the queen's service, and more were the daily concern of a group of ministers who were Elizabeth's men of all work.

Beneath the Council were the major divisions of state: the secretariat, which numbered no more than fifteen; the judicial machinery, with a staff of fifty persons at the most; the regional administrations such as the duchy of Lancaster, with its own petty treasury and some forty officials, the earldom of Chester, the Council of the North, and the government of Wales - all four run by no more than 145 officials; and the largest office, the treasury, with its cadre of 200 custom officials and some sixty-five clerks of the exchequer at Westminster. Although Elizabeth ruled her kingdom with a bureaucracy of scarcely 500 salaried persons, she also had at her command an unsung and unpaid regiment of amateur officials who brought the paternalism of Tudor government directly to the countryside. These were the 1,500 justices of the peace. Never, said Sir Thomas Smith, one of the queen's secretaries, was there "in any commonwealth devised a more wise, a more dulce and gentle, a more certain way to rule the people." Chosen from among the men of birth and substance who lived in each county, the justices of the peace united the two essentials of good government - knowledge of the law and understanding of local conditions. Justices were often members of Parliament, and all of them had friends and relations among the luminaries of the court and the great nobles of the realm. They were the eyes, ears, and hands of the Privy Council, informing the government of local crises, fixing wages, watching over the parish poor, supervising weights and measures, maintaining the peace, collecting parliamentary taxes, and inspecting the county levies. There was nothing like them anywhere else in Europe, where kings were forced to rule through paid servants who were placed in charge of local administration.

Just as the queen, the heart and head of the state, was considered to rule by divine right, the "better part" of society - the nobility and the gentry - were believed to have divine sanction for their positions too, having been ordained by God to help her. In solitary and wealthy grandeur near the apex of society stood the sixty or so peers of the realm, who were worth anywhere from 20,000 to 100,000 pounds and rivaled even the queen in the lavishness of their hospitality and the magnificence of their semi-feudal households. Although the Tudor aristocrat vigorously maintained his privileged and almost divine position in society, he differed from his colleague in France in one essential quality - he had become

domesticated. The cherished tradition of baronial feuding and independence lingered on in the northern shires, but the Tudor crown never tolerated such princely houses as the Guises and Bourbons, whose wealth and political influence allowed them to act as laws unto themselves. Below the great peers, but closely related by blood and interest, were the country gentlemen and their mercantile and professional cousins in trade, in law, and in the Church. They numbered no more than 3,000 to 4,000, and most of them possessed upward of fifty pounds a year - in an age that accounted two pounds, ten shillings a marginal but adequate income. These were the real governors of the kingdom, a select and intimate group from whom the queen appointed her paid and unpaid servants and to whom she offered the richest prizes of office. Elizabeth may have given unity and leadership to the kingdom, but the crown existed only in federation with the local, regional, and class interests of these natural leaders of society.

The highest authority of the realm was not the solitary voice of a willful and capricious sovereign but the authority of the organ that spoke for all interests within the commonwealth - king in Parliament. When Elizabeth sat in the midst of her Lords and Commons and when legislation was enacted by the whole Parliament, then the kingdom spoke *ex cathedra*. The voice of the realm might, in fact, be that of the monarch, but constitutionally, it was assumed that it was the sound of all elements singing but a single song. Parliament was ideally considered to be the "highest and most absolute power of the realm" because "every Englishman is intended to be there present . . . from the prince . . . to the lowest person in England." No one knew better than Elizabeth how to play upon the heartstrings of her loyal Commons or how to produce a perfect political accord. Within the mystical union of Lords, Commons, and crown, the strong voice of the queen and her Council established the pitch and set the tempo of government. The proper role of Parliament, especially that of the lower house, was to beseech and petition, not to command or initiate. It was true that members belonged to the "better part" of society and were expected to give leadership to the vulgar multitude in town and shire, but policy belonged to the head, the prince, and the Privy Council. Justices of the peace, overseers of the poor, sheriffs, and even lord lieutenants of the county were merely vessels

through which authority was translated into local administration. When Elizabeth firmly informed a rebellious House of Commons, which was demanding the death sentence for Mary Queen of Scots, that "if I should say unto you that I mean to grant your petition, I should then tell you more than is fit for you to know," she was stating her regal conviction that the members of the Commons were no more than humble petitioners.

The queen was acutely aware that her political control of Parliament would continue so long as she was financially solvent. During the first years of the reign, Elizabeth was parsimonious to an extreme, hoarding her regular non-parliamentary income of 200,000 pounds a year, cutting her expenses by half, liquidating her sister's debt, building up a slight surplus, and establishing on the Continent such a solid credit that she was able to borrow at 8 percent interest, whereas Philip of Spain was charged as much as 18 percent. In Elizabeth's estimation, it was important that the crown should never have to come to Commons to beg for money. Unfortunately, war made the queen insolvent, and potential bankruptcy made her dependent upon Parliament. She did everything she could to avoid frequent sessions and requests for money, and she mortgaged the Stuart future by consuming her capital in order to avoid excessive taxation. In a single year, she divested the crown of 120,000 pounds worth of land in order to finance her costly Irish war. In the end, the weight of financial reality proved overpowering; Henry VII had been able to manage with an average yearly parliamentary grant of 11,500 pounds to supplement his ordinary revenues; his son's dependence rose to 30,000 pounds, and Elizabeth's reached 50,000 pounds a year. When Elizabeth's Secretary of State, Sir Thomas Smith, wrote that what a commonwealth desired most was "peace, liberty, quietness, little taking of their money, few parliaments," he unconsciously linked two crucial elements - taxation and representation. There could be neither few nor obedient parliaments so long as there was much taking of money.

Toward the close of her long reign, a new voice was being heard in parliamentary committees, in Commons' chamber, and in country mansions. Slowly, hesitantly, and inarticulately, the landed classes, speaking through the House of Commons and using the weapons of finance to add weight to their demand, were urging a partnership in which crown

and Parliament would sing a duet. So long as the queen and her loyal Commons shared the concept of a divinely inspired and carefully regulated society and agreed on what was best for the common sort, harmony prevailed. When crown and Parliament parted company in their views, the harsh sounds of constitutional discord were heard with increasing frequency until they reached a crescendo in the civil war of 1642.

The structure and pattern of Elizabethan government were deceptively simple. The ordered ranks, that tidy hierarchy of queen, Privy Council, regional governments, law courts, Parliament, and local administration, provided a framework for the most vital aspect of Tudor government: sensitivity to the shifting nuances of public sentiment. The greatness of Elizabeth's accomplishment lay in the sixth sense that led her to demand of her subjects only what they wished to give, in the talent of bestowing upon the socially prominent elements of society the fruits of office while depriving them of the power of government, and in the artistry by which she enveloped functions of state in a magic veil of pomp and circumstance. As a result of that magic, "mere English" Elizabeth Tudor was elevated to a goddess-queen, and her beardless boys at court became Olympian heroes in worshipful attendance.

All Elizabethans knew that "in pompous circumstances a secret of government doth much consist." Government was always on display, and the imagination of the multitude was captivated by gorgeous dress, robes of state, gold brocade, and majestic processions. The symbols of state and authority were human, but authority was dull and unimpressive without the sound of cannons, the glitter of gold, and the clatter of horses' hoofs. The goddess-queen had to be decked in silver bodice, satin gown, and silken farthingale; she had to live in gorgeous establishments and be surrounded by the trappings of endless wealth, for without ceremony she was but another woman. Richmond Palace was "a splendid and magnificent house"; Hampton Court was "a noble and uniform pile" and all its walls shone with gold and silver; Whitehall, that most ancient of all royal establishments, contained more than 2,000 rooms; and Nonsuch, so called because there was none other like it, was so adorned with gold that Elizabeth thought it afire when she saw it sparkling in the light of the setting sun.

If the fairyland quality surrounding kings was intended to captivate the eye, royal generosity was designed in order to win men's hearts and loyalty. Robert Cecil spoke from a lifetime of experience when he said that "bounty is an essential virtue of the king." The key to Tudor politics rested upon the control of this generosity, for no Elizabethan official ever received a salary that was commensurate with his position: The Lord Keeper of the Great Seal earned a stipend of 919 pounds a year; the Lord Admiral 200 pounds, and the principal secretary 100 pounds, but in 1601 all three posts were actually valued at approximately 3,000 pounds a year. Gratuities and fees for promoting a friend, urging a favor, giving information, and above all, for tapping and directing the bounty of the queen made up the difference between official salary and actual income. They were considered as the legitimate perquisites of office in an age that regarded governmental posts as both public trusts and private sinecures.

At the sovereign's disposal were pensions, annuities, leases, monopolies, titles, and honors, including about 1,200 positions, which ranged in importance and profit from the principal offices of the realm down to the gunners of the Tower and the stewards and bailiffs of the crown lands. Between the sovereign and a swarm of suitors anxious to partake of royal bounty, there existed an inner core of councilors and favorites, who attracted to themselves the admiration and the wealth of lesser men desirous of protection or advancement in society. When old Lord Burghley died, a forsaken patron seeker wrote to his son, Robert Cecil, expressing a desire "to be protected . . . under the shadow of your wings," which he rightly judged to be as extensive as his father's. As the medieval baron had held men loyal to him by ties of lordship, so the sixteenth-century aristocrat based his political power upon the exercise of influence and built up personal followings held together by ties of patronage. "My good Lord," wrote one Elizabethan wise to the realities of political life, "advancement in all worlds be obtained by mediation and remembrance of noble friends." Remembrance was always made easier by the presentation of a well-timed gift. The amount was expected to be commensurate with the favor demanded; when the countess of Warwick was offered 100 pounds to influence the queen in a law case in chancery, she considered the sum to be too

small. The essence of Elizabethan politics was clearly perceived by Lord Burghley in the simple formula for success that he offered his son. "Be sure," he said, "to keep some great man thy friend but trouble him not for trifles."

That a political system based on patronage, graft, influence, factionalism, ceremony, and queen worship did not deteriorate into simple jobbery, fawning corruption, and senseless ritualism was one of the marvels of the Elizabethan age. Elsewhere in Europe, and particularly in France, personal hatreds, party factions, and human avarice palsied the hand of royal government, but in England Gloriana succeeded in ruling by factions and parties, which she herself "made, upheld, and weakened, as her own great judgment advised." On the Continent, men placed loyalty to God, to overlord, and to estate higher than their duty to the sovereign, but during the "calm and quiet season" of Elizabeth's reign, subjects agreed with Lord Burghley when he said that he had "no affection to be of a party, but for the queen's majesty." The ruling classes of England were tied to Elizabeth by links of air that were as strong and enduring as iron, for the queen knew how to appeal to their self-interest and their love, and when she accounted it "the glory of my crown that I have reigned with your loves," she spoke no more than the truth.

Elizabethan England was exposed to all the disrupting forces of the century, feudal privileges, Renaissance pride, religious zeal, and commercial cupidity, but instead of destroying the kingdom they gave new vitality and dynamism to the medieval ideal of balance, order, and degree. In Spain, respect for class descended to pride in caste, the harmonious commonwealth stiffened into a rigid bureaucracy ruled by a petty and pedantic monarch, and tranquility and concord deteriorated into an orthodoxy of thought so rigid that Spaniards preferred to be illiterate rather than risk the charge of heresy. In France, another woman of the age, Catherine de Médicis, endeavored to do for her adopted land what Elizabeth had done for England, to preserve "the reverence wherewith a king is girt about from God" and to cast the mantle of her feminism over all factions. But in France, the queen regent's magic was no more than clever legerdemain, her aspirations mere family and dynastic aggrandizement, her policy subtle intrigue; and though her methods were no more devious than Elizabeth's, the results were discord, bloodshed, and monstrous civil war.

IV

RAGE IN HEAVEN

The years preceding the birth of Elizabeth were heavy with foreboding. In 1531, the heavens broke out into astronomic display, and an ominous comet, bright with fire and with a giant yellow tail, lit up the western sky. The same year two flying standards had been seen moving across the sky, and in Germany it was reported that the air was filled with soldiers, headed God knew where but certainly sent to do the Lord's bidding. Everywhere there were signs of frantic battle, mysterious claps of thunder, fireballs, strange and terrifying lights, and flaming crosses in the sky. Rage in heaven had commenced, and all the omens pointed to great and terrible events on earth. God and Satan were once again in mortal conflict, and as never before, men's souls stood in jeopardy. On both sides, the ranks were closing, and men were called upon to stand up and be counted, to declare themselves, and to give their lives in defense of the truth.

Two events of those years passed without notice amidst all the divine and atmospheric commotion. In 1531, three students attending the University of Paris - Pierre Lefèvre, Francis Xavier, and Ignatius Loyola - tacked a picture of Jesus on the door of the room they shared, and in contempt, other students dubbed the inmates the *Societas Jesu.* Such was the quiet beginning of those militant shock troops of the Church, the Jesuits. Two years later, another scholar at the University made history also; John Calvin suddenly became overwhelmed with the knowledge that he had been made the chosen vessel of the Lord. A great light broke upon him as he realized "in what a quagmire of errors" he had wallowed and with "what filth and shame" he had covered himself.

Calvin and Loyola, both men of iron will and inflexible conviction, began the reordering of the religious ranks, the recasting of Christendom into two armed and militant Churches, and the reforging of the metal of which martyrs and heroes are made. The religious energy marshaled by the two leaders represented a far greater break with the past than had the new learning of Erasmus or the new religion of Martin Luther, for in both the Protestant and Catholic camps, the medieval atmosphere had continued to predominate until well into the 1530s. Luther was a medieval man, closer to Wycliffe and Huss than to Calvin or to Knox.

His words brought fear to his enemies, his voice struck down the walls of Satan, and his faith moved mountains, but his

appeal was to the heart, not the mind. Luther had begun as an academic reformer of abuses; even when driven into open revolution, he was unhappy about throwing out the baby with the bath water, casting out ancient ceremonies simply because they had been misused by evil men. Always, if in vain, the hope of religious reconciliation remained, the expectation that Christian men of good faith could somehow settle their differences and live together in brotherhood and peace.

Even in open defiance, Luther continued to be a cherubic-faced monk with more of the publican than of the fanatic about him. He hurled ink pots at the devil in an understandable fashion, and for all his reasoned logic about *The Bondage of the Will*, he wondered whether it was "not against reason that all mankind should be subject to toil, sickness, and death just because one man took a bite out of an apple."

Luther's spiritual despair and shocked conscience at the sight of clerical corruption had driven him into revolt, yet the medieval background from which he emerged - his monastic experiences and his scholastic education - prevented him from crossing the threshold into the modern world. It remained for the second generation, for John Calvin, to provide the Reformation with a modern outlook and outfit Lutheranism in the armor of military discipline and doctrinal orthodoxy.

The first generation of the Catholic Counter-Reformation experienced a similar change. The humanistic Christianity of Erasmus at Basle and the mysticism of Lefèvre d'Etaples in France represented a unique mixture of learning, laughter, and piety. Early sixteenth-century Catholic reform within the Church was tolerant, humane, and individualistic. The ranks of reformers were filled with men who in their innocence expected that good will, good scholarship, and good fellowship would free the Church of corruption, heal the wound of schism, and do away with error. In the end, however, the old Church died in the fury of the Protestant heresy. In defeat and humiliation, the Catholic Church was forced to find new strength and new spiritual resources with which to roll back the armies of the devil; but the means were those of a new generation, the tempered and flexible will of Ignatius Loyola and his Society of Jesus, and not the

soft compromise and idle words of humanistic scholars and mystics.

Calvin began his career as a French scholar and lawyer of petty bourgeois extraction who eventually overcame pathological shyness and grinding ill health to do the Lord's bidding. Loyola was an untutored Spanish soldier and court reprobate of impoverished noble descent who willed himself to sainthood. The Frenchman was a theologian with the strength to live by the terrifying conclusions of his own logic; the Spaniard was a sixteenth-century psychiatrist and catcher of men's souls, who by the sheer strength of his will turned imagination into reality. Both men fought to conquer the world of the spirit and to fashion a disciplined and ordered army dedicated to God's service. Calvin and Loyola were adversaries in an irreconcilable conflict, yet never were there two men so different in their background and their approach and so similar in their achievement. The French lawyer-theologian would not permit a marker for his grave (it might be venerated by the superstitious); the Spanish soldier-saint would not sit for his portrait (there was never time.) Each became the model that his devoted followers aspired to emulate, and each branded his movement with the force of his personality. By 1558, when Elizabeth succeeded to the throne, Protestantism was no longer Lutheran and German but Calvinistic and international; Catholicism was no longer humanistic and Roman but militant and Jesuitic.

John Calvin was born on July 10, 1509, the son of Gerard Cauvin, the registrar of the town of Noyon in France. For two generations, the community had been divided into furiously hostile camps over the bones of Saint Eloi. Who possessed the authentic remains and who the fake? The canons of the cathedral or the monks of the abbey? Later in life, Calvin commented on the confusion and profusion of relics throughout France, and he calculated that the wood guaranteed to come from the true cross amounted to "a good shipload," the nails of the cross numbered fourteen, and the worshipers of sacred relics ran "the risk of reverencing the bones of some thief or robber, or of an ass, a dog, or a horse."

Calvin was brought up to be a cleric. He was made a chaplain of the cathedral of Noyon at the age of eleven; at fourteen he was sent to the University of Paris, where he studied the

great schoolmen of the medieval past - Aquinas, Bonaventure, Scotus, and Gerson. Shy, introspective, and hypersensitive, the young scholar was intellectually precocious, morally priggish, and so unyielding in his opposition to vice and weakness that legend records he was referred to as the accusative case for his didactic and argumentative spirit. At Paris, Calvin was swept up by the warm breath of Renaissance humanism. His first published work was a gloss on Seneca's *De clementia.* It was written in impeccable Latin, bristled with classical learning, and exuded high ethical principles. In 1528, at his father's sudden demand, Calvin added training in the law to classical learning and medieval scholarship, and by 1533, his education was complete and the vessel was ready to receive the spirit of God. He had made himself into a jurist, theologian, and Latinist. Yet for all his intellectual feats, he remained deeply dissatisfied and found, as he later wrote, that "the more closely I examined myself the more was my conscience tormented by sharp stings so that there was no solace or comfort left to me save that of deluding myself by oblivion."

Oblivion was not John Calvin's fate, for in 1533, he heard the Lord speak and became "inflamed with so intense a desire to progress" that he resolved to renounce his ecclesiastical offices and raise his voice against the evils of the Roman Church. He fled to Basle and in 1535 commenced that true, perfect, and final pronouncement on God's Word - *The Institutes of the Christian Religion.* First published in 1536, *The Institutes* was brief by theological standards, little more than 500 pages, yet it did for Protestant knowledge what the *Summa theologica* of Thomas Aquinas had done for the medieval Church and what the Council of Trent would shortly do for sixteenth-century Catholicism. Calvin summarized and systematized the creed, and disciplined and ordered the ranks of the believers, so that the truth could be defended against any heresy that might arise within Protestantism as well as against the papal Antichrist and the Romish court of darkness. *The Institutes* was the quintessence of the Protestant thought, which had been formulated by Luther, Zwingli, Erasmus, and Philipp Melanchthon. It was a faultlessly rational and convincing statement of the ultimate logic of the Protestant Reformation, a work that Jonathan Edwards was to call "a delightful doctrine, exceeding bright, pleasant, and sweet." Within nine months of its publication,

every copy had been sold to men who were desperate to be told the truth.

The book's central tenet, around which all others revolved, was the existence of an inscrutable God who was bound neither by compassion nor by the laws of science but was "the Arbiter and Governor of all things," a sovereign, omniscient, and capricious force, who "by His own power executes what He has decreed." The inescapable corollaries to such a thesis were the doctrines of predestination and election. For Calvin, it was impossible for a leaf to fall or a decision to be formed without the express command of the deity, and the gates of the kingdom of heaven were open to those few who were the elect of God. Man, according to the Calvinist creed, was sinful and still bore the stain of Adam's disobedience; in justice, God, who was omnipotent, would find it inconsistent to save any man. Nevertheless, He selected for salvation certain men, irrespective of their deserts, in order to reveal to the world the complete freedom and total power of His authority. Calvin's God would not even be bound by his own sense of justice. That Adam disobeyed God and brought upon posterity the wrath of heaven by divine command and that the hand that grasped the apple was moved by God's will were historic facts that might seem unjust to man's faulty reason; but in the divine scheme of things they were in no way illogical, for God was "above logic; indeed, God made logic just as he made the apple."

The Institutes was a call to arms, to labor, to do battle, and above all to witness God's glory and spread His Word abroad. To Calvin, the whole world was "the theatre of God's glory." God's doctrine, however, could never be victorious without commotion and suffering, for only Satan's creed was ever accepted by all without contention. And so Calvinists expected opposition. By definition, they were poor security risks, for no earthly authority could claim their obedience. They were the soldiers of the Lord, and as true believers, said Knox, could never be expected to "frame their religion according to the appetite of their princes." In Calvinism, Protestant minorities found the strength to resist and the justification to disobey established authority. Puritans in England, Presbyterians in Scotland, and Huguenots in France considered themselves the chosen instruments of sublime grace. In abandoning themselves to the majesty of God's will, they felt themselves to be the equals of any earthly king. The structured and

hallowed hierarchy of social and political authority, so dear to the hearts of the custodians of the well-ordered commonwealth, was meaningless to men who hearkened to the voice of inner conscience. The Word of God was heard in their hearts, and it was of greater import than the weightiest pronouncements of pope, magistrate, or king. Calvin never argued the right of revolution, but the spirit of disobedience was implicit in his statement that "where the glory of God is not made the end of the government, it is not a legitimate sovereignty, but a usurpation." Peter Wentworth summed up the Puritan position in England and elsewhere in Europe when, during a debate in Parliament, he presumptuously but positively told Archbishop Parker and the other bishops: "We will pass nothing before we understand what it is; for that were but to make you popes."

His vision of heaven on earth led John Calvin to make one of the grand experiments of all times - the founding of that "most perfect school of Christ that ever was on earth since the days of the apostles," the theocratic community of Geneva in Switzerland. In July 1536, Calvin had chanced to visit Geneva, where an impetuous, if irritating, member of the elect, William Farel, was waging a furious battle against the forces of popery. Farel was as fiery as his brilliant red hair. On one occasion, earlier in his tempestuous career, he had risen while Mass was being celebrated, walked up to the surprised priest, knocked the consecrated bread from his hand, and calmly announced to the astonished audience that God was above in heaven and not in a piece of ritualistic trickery on earth. A short time before Calvin's arrival in Geneva, Farel had succeeded in getting the city council to proclaim political independence from the House of Savoy and spiritual liberation from Rome, and to vote "to live henceforth according to the Law of the Gospel and the Word of God, and to abolish all papal abuses." Such an ardent reformer could spearhead a revolution, but he could not discipline the revolutionists; the iron will and organizational talents of Calvin were needed to complete the transformation of the city of Geneva into the kingdom of God.

To the ordinary ordeal of living, Farel and Calvin added the ordeal of saintliness. Both men were possessed by a beatific vision in which all of God's people were arrayed within the fold in tidy and disciplined ranks. For those who refused to "submit themselves wholeheartedly to the Word of God in

complete obedience," excommunication was prescribed. In Geneva, there were many obstinate folk who preferred sinfulness to saintliness and sloth to salvation. Calvin was ready to meet their challenge by instituting a government of God's elect, who had a stake in paradise as well as in mundane society.

In January 1537, the "perfect school of Christ" was outlined in a series of articles establishing a system of Church-state government that from the start smacked more of the schoolhouse than the house of God. Geneva was transformed into a theocracy where the two swords of Christ, the civil and ecclesiastical, acted together in perfect harmony, with the Council of Two Hundred ruling the city and the Venerable Company of clergymen overseeing morality and governing the Church. The Council retained the power to legislate and punish, but the Venerable Company was expected to scrutinize the life of every citizen and report any moral lapses and to inspire the secular government to acts of devotion and godly legislation. Discipline and her handmaid, inspection, were the symbols of the new Geneva, for if the Church consisted of all the believers and not merely the clergy, then it was essential that every member be wholesome of heart and pure of mind. "To accomplish this," Calvin wrote, "we have decided . . . to appoint and choose certain persons of upright life and good reputation among all the faithful" who shall have "an eye to the life and conduct of each one." For the good citizens of Geneva, there were not only to be windows into their souls but also great doors into their domestic, business, and social affairs. The grand experiment in applied theology had begun, and thenceforth the life of every man was to measure up to the scriptural standards of purity.

Attendance at church and at morning prayers was strictly enforced. Popery was exterminated root and branch, and even the celebration of Christmas - a devil's Mass and bacchanalian brawl - was prohibited under pain of imprisonment. The theatre was denounced, especially the new and degenerate Italian custom of allowing women to perform on the stage instead of employing boys to play female roles. The women who appeared in theatrical productions, according to Calvinistic argument, had no purpose in mind other than "to expose their bodies, clothes, and ornaments to excite the impure desires of the

spectators," all of which was utterly "contrary to the modesty of women, who ought to be shamefaced and shy." The initials *IHS* were placed on all public buildings, coins, and city flags; the number of bowling greens was reduced sharply, and in every respect, Geneva became a Protestant Sparta.

It is far too easy to caricature Calvin's Geneva as a dreadful combination of a reformatory and a Christian revival meeting and school for saints, a veritable "dictatorship of the praying classes," in which neither common sense nor common happiness prevailed. Calvinism, however, was never "the haunting fear that someone somewhere may be happy," as H. L. Mencken has described it, for Calvinistic Genevans, Puritan English, and Huguenot French were not devoid of laughter and joy. Puritans danced, wined, and made merry in the privacy of their homes. Good fellowship, which was the fruit of godliness, was to be welcomed. It was gaiety for man's sake that was to be avoided. The trouble with God's elect in the eyes of more politic men was their determination to thunder against the evils of this world and their conviction that it was the minister's duty to God to speak as "a dying man to dying men." Calvinist preachers were rarely known for their tact or moderation, for Calvin never regarded the clerical office as being so limited in its scope that "when the sermon is delivered we may rest as if our task were done."

The preacher had to take care to see that souls were not lost as a result of his own lack of vigilance. The need to bring the Lord's way to all men made the Calvinist a busybody, and nothing was too obscure, nothing too inconsequential to be considered by the Church elders. The consistory, a body of the clergy sitting in company with twelve lay elders who were elected by the city council, decided cases involving fortunetelling, the singing of obscene songs, overindulgence, blasphemy, adultery, as well as more serious problems such as witchcraft and heresy. Matters of apparel, women's hairstyles, and two cases of adultery involving Calvin's own sister-in-law and his stepdaughter were brought to the consistory's attention. The names given children at baptism were carefully culled, and if any was found to be objectionable, it was prohibited. Such Catholic names as Claude and Martin were barred as indicating a secret and idolatrous reverence for saints, whereas such questionable designations as Sepulcher, Sunday, and Jesus were outlawed as being in poor taste. Calvin, however, did not have to

struggle with the English Puritan habit of bestowing such godly and imaginative names as Renewed, Fear-not, Accepted (an English archbishop carried that name), Be-thankful, Faint-not, Love-God, Live-well, and the mouth-filling Fight-the-good-fight-of-faith.

In 1546, the inns of Geneva were reorganized as "abbeys" and placed under strict government supervision, and a precise code of behavior for guests and hosts was laid down. Among other items it included the following:

> If any one blasphemes the name of God or says, "By the body, 'sblood, zounds" or anything like, or who gives himself to the devil or uses similar execrable imprecations, he shall be punished. . . .
>
> *Item:* The host shall not allow any person of whatever quality he be to drink or eat anything in his house without first having asked a blessing and afterward said grace.
>
> *Item:* The host shall be obliged to keep in a public place a French Bible, in which anyone who wishes may read. . . .
>
> *Item:* The host shall not allow any dissoluteness like dancing, dice, or cards, nor shall he receive anyone suspected of being a debauchee or ruffian.
>
> *Item:* He shall only allow people to play honest games without swearing or blasphemy, and without wasting more time than that allowed for a meal. . . .
>
> *Item:* Nobody shall be allowed to sit up after nine o'clock at night except spies.

Calvin demanded that the city of Geneva become the armed citadel of God and that absolute discipline of behavior and orthodoxy of thought be maintained as an example to all Europe. The self-appointed pope of the Protestant world was more than a pastor; he was a general, and his followers were soldiers in the Lord's service. It was essential to success that God's army be built upon obedience to the divine Word as revealed in Scripture and interpreted by Calvin.

One of the first to clash with Geneva's warden of morality was a man named Pierre Ameaux, whose ancestral livelihood, the manufacture of playing cards, had been destroyed by the new

discipline. In 1546, at a supper party given in his own house, Ameaux indulged in the ill-advised luxury of calling Calvin a preacher of false doctrines and prophesied that the government would soon be in the hands of fanatical French religious exiles who were flocking by the hundreds to the city. Ameaux's confidences were reported to the consistory by one of his own guests. His attack was not viewed merely as a personal affront to one of God's ministers, but as an insult to "the honor of Christ" whose servant Calvin knew himself to be. The Council of Two Hundred ordered Ameaux to present himself and on bended knee seek humble pardon of Calvin. But that outraged defender of the Lord would have no such mildness shown to a man who had insulted the "name of God," and he prevailed upon the Council to reconsider its verdict and change the punishment to a more suitable one: Ameaux, clad only in a shirt, was ordered to walk through the streets of the city and kneel down in public to beg the mercy of God and the city magistrates for his ill-advised words.

Ameaux's opposition to Calvin was largely the result of economic grievance; the case of Michael Servetus was far more dangerous. Servetus was a Spanish physician whom history has treated as a hero, but whom contemporaries, both Protestant and Catholic, viewed as the most dangerous of criminals, for he denied the Trinity and the doctrine of original sin. He was thought of as a murderer of the soul, and his death by slow fire, in 1553, was greeted with applause by the entire Christian world. Calvin had known of Servetus in their university days in Paris, and he had been horrified even then by the Spaniard's pseudo-unitarian arguments. Servetus represented a pernicious threat from within the Protestant ranks, for he symbolized the tendency of the Protestant faith to disintegrate into a flock of warring sects ranging in alphabetical lunacy from Adventists, Biddelians, Bohemenists, and Christadelphians, to Salmonists, Traskites, and Tyronists.

Servetus lived in France for a decade, but finally fled to Vienna and in 1553 published the *Restitution of Christianity,* a work that immediately brought him to the attention of the Catholic authorities. He escaped from their prison and for reasons bordering on insanity sought safety in the city of the man who had denounced him in his university days, who had been writing vicious attacks upon his views, and who may, in fact, have betrayed his identity to the Catholic inquisition in Vienna. The moment Servetus set foot in Geneva, he was

recognized, arrested, tried, found guilty of heresy, and sentenced to death by slow burning. Still possessed of Satan, he died on October 27, 1553, at the hands of men who accounted the agony of the stake as slight compared to hell's fire. To Calvin, the ranks of the faithful had to be preserved and heresy stamped out, for his Geneva was more than a Protestant stronghold and *The Institutes* more than a statement of righteousness. His city was the tabernacle of the Lord and a model for all believers, and his book was the tablet of God's Word.

For all the portraits of the man that survive, and the intimate details that were recorded by his flock, John Calvin remains strangely inhuman. With his emaciated body and his uncompromising face dominated by a beaked nose, an unsmiling mouth, and eyes that looked with sorrow on a world filled with ignorance and evil, Calvin the man was replaced by Calvin the elect of God. His anger was monumental, his will uncompromising, his logic irrefutable, and his task Herculean. He was never beset by doubt, only by ill health and exhaustion, both of which he willed away. Fastidious to the point of madness, he could not endure even a speck of dust to mar the blackness of his gown. No detail was too trifling for him, no task done in the Lord's name too inconsequential. John Calvin must be numbered among the saints, if only because of the intensity of his emotions and the strength of his convictions. Like the saints, he is of interest to humanity, but he lies outside its power of compassion or comprehension, for, as he said himself, his strength was not his own but belonged to the Lord. Calvin's reputation rests not simply on his record as master of that "perfect school of Christ" but even more on his achievement in building his rival to Catholicism, a tightly organized, self-sufficient, and international Church dedicated to bringing the standards of heaven to earth.

Roman Catholics considered Calvin's Geneva as the center of an international and diabolical conspiracy to overthrow all established order and to subvert the true faith; but to Protestants the city was a source of inspired preachers and organizers who went forth in God's name to every country of Europe. Calvin himself was tireless in his efforts to organize the faithful on an international scale. His correspondence was voluminous, his advice endless, and his encouragement to stand firm in the knowledge of the Lord a source of strength

throughout Europe. He was in touch with Queen Elizabeth and the King of Lithuania. He advised Thomas Cranmer in England, John Knox in Scotland, Jan Laski in Poland, and Admiral Coligny in France, and in each case, his militant message was the same: "If He pleases to make use of you even to death in His battle, He will uphold you by His mighty hand to fight firmly, and will not suffer a single drop of your blood to remain useless." In May 1559, Calvin founded his Academy, the spawning ground for religious revolutionists, and in its first year, thirty-two ministers were dispatched to strengthen the army of the Lord in its struggle against Catholicism. Geneva began to attract the faithful from all over Europe. Each year, the flood of exiles pouring into the city mounted: eighty-one in 1549, 145 in 1550, 587 in 1557, and over 1,600 in 1559. The great majority of them came from France, but several hundred flocked in from Italy, fifty or so from England, a scattering from Spain, and even a small colony from Greece and Tunis, which was under Spanish control at the time.

Geneva, under the firm leadership of Calvin, had become the haven and oracle for militant Protestantism. After his death, at the age of fifty-four, on May 27, 1564, it was the source of endless propaganda, which poured from the city's new printing presses and from the sharp pens of reformers eager to instruct the elect of other lands on how to build their Churches in the face of persecution and bitter official opposition. In France, an entire state within a state was organized illegally with the establishment of dozens of interconnected religious cells or consistories, each modeled on the Church of Geneva and staffed with a pastor, elders, and deacons. The first of these was organized in Paris in 1555; four years later, Calvinist Presbyterian congregations had sprung up in seventy-two other French towns. The spirit that directed the new Church and the ministers who guided God's flock came from Geneva. In 1559, thirty-two preachers went forth to labor among the Lord's followers in France; in 1560, twelve more followed; the next year, the number rose to ninety. By the outbreak of the French civil war in 1562, a religious organization had been fashioned that rigidly disciplined and controlled the faith and personal lives of possibly 1.5 million French out of a population of 16 million.

The consistory, which exercised inquisitorial powers over the beliefs and the activities of each French congregation, was

the basic ecclesiastical unit. Above the consistory rose a tightly disciplined hierarchy, extending from the regional and provincial colloquies to the national synod, a governing body of ministers and elders who trained Calvinist preachers and passed final judgment on doctrine and oversaw the actions of the faithful. The structure was as authoritarian and paternalistic as anything that could be found in Geneva. Pastors were chastised for being too dull or too flippant; husbands were ordered to keep their household staffs disciplined or warned about beating their wives; entire congregations were admonished to attend church more regularly.

The French Calvinists were called Huguenots or Night Specters for the quiet and stealthy way in which they slipped to church meetings in the dark of the night. Militant, disciplined, and elite, they felt themselves to be separate from the corrupt society of God's saints on earth. Throughout the 1560s, cells were founded to spread the Word of God, to defend His faith, and transform the realm into a kingdom of heaven. Under their impact, the religious spectrum in France was polarized: Pacifistic Lutheranism, with its doctrine of quiet submission to authority, slowly gave way to Calvinism and a granite determination to resist. To men of the new persuasion who viewed life as a spiritual drama, the claims of religion dwarfed any sense of loyalty to either dynasty or state. The Huguenot felt closer to his Dutch, Scottish, and English brethren than he did to his countrymen - the overwhelming majority of whom remained Catholic. France in 1560 stood on the brink of ideological and civil war. "At one time," a contemporary observed, "friends and enemies were distinguished by the frontiers of provinces and kingdoms and were called Italians, Germans, French, Spaniards, English, and the like; now we must say Catholics and heretics, and a Catholic prince must consider all Catholics of all countries as his friends, just as the heretics consider all heretics as friends and subjects whether they are their own vassals or not."

Whether civil war would actually have erupted in France without the agitation of a numerically small but persistent community of "precise folk," who would "offer their goods and bodies to prison rather than they should relent," is a matter of guesswork. In sixteenth-century France, forces were operating that had little to do with religion, but that happened to coincide fatally with the gathering spiritual storm. A

degenerate monarchy, mounting feudal and provincial resistance to the incompetent royal bureaucracy, and the growing irresponsibility of an aristocracy confronted with economic ruin, contributed heavily to the disaster of civil war that broke out in 1562, two years before Calvin died in Geneva. The language of sedition remained religious, however; discontented Frenchmen, whether bourgeois or aristocratic, sought support from the one really organized and disciplined body within the state, the Calvinist Presbyterian Church.

In England, the story was similar but the conclusion different. Calvinists hot out of Geneva had been frustrated in their original efforts to influence the Elizabethan religious settlement of 1559 strongly in their favor, but within a decade, they launched a new campaign to seize the Church from within and to legislate the New Jerusalem into existence by means of parliamentary statute. Everywhere during the 1570s, Puritan cells, similar to those in France and the Netherlands, were organized. In the universities, in the mansions of the aristocracy, in the houses of great financiers, and above all in Parliament, the "unspotted lambs of the Lord" forged a party, dedicated to the work of God's will, in which the voice of the divinity spoke more clearly than the dictates of political wisdom. In the eyes of fervent reformers, the Church of England remained in desperate need of purification and redemption. It lacked a pope and a Mass, but otherwise it retained the lavish trappings of the Whore of Rome. Worse yet, the Church was the child of worldly necessity and not of God. In the words of one Puritan agitator, John Field, it had been "framed out of man's own brain and fantasy" and was even worse than popery.

The campaign against the Church commenced in 1570, when both press and pulpit were utilized to re-educate the queen and her people. Led by a defrocked Cambridge don named Thomas Cartwright, the Puritans spoke out against the ignorance and inefficiency of the Established Church; they branded cathedrals as "dens of lazy, loitering lubbards," and the prayer book a thing "picked out of that popish dunghill, the Mass-book, full of abominations."

The crisis, however, did not come until 1587, when the Puritan party tried to reform the Anglican Church by act of Parliament. In doing so, they blatantly defied the queen's

prerogative, incurred her wrath, and attempted to usurp a constitutional function that Elizabeth firmly believed belonged to the crown. Cope's Bill and Book, as the two Puritan statutes were called, demanded the abolition of the Anglican episcopate and prayer book and their replacement by a prayer book and Church modeled on those of Geneva. The Bill and Book received short shrift from the queen, who ordered both withdrawn from Commons.

English Puritanism from the start was faced with a dilemma almost as old as man himself - double loyalties. In a clash between man's law and God's decree, the faithful had no choice but to follow the higher authority. Yet there was no doubt that the Puritans were loyal to Elizabeth as well as to their religion; and when one good evangelist had his hand struck off for writing against the queen's proposed marriage to a French and Catholic prince, he raised his hat with his remaining hand and shouted: "God save the queen." Yet Elizabeth was adamant in her opposition to Puritanism in whatever form it happened to appear, for she sensed from the start a fundamental truth about the sect - Puritan creed and organization were totally incompatible with the Tudor theory of paternalism and the doctrine of the organic state. More specifically, it was evident to her that a community of saints claiming spiritual authority derived directly from God was contrary not only to the theory of episcopacy but also to the existence of a monarchy that exercised historic and extensive religious prerogatives and claimed divinity from God. As early as 1573, the Established Church had acknowledged the threat, and the dean of York pointed out the dialectic of Puritanism when he wrote: "At the beginning, it was but a cap, a surplice, and a tippet over which these preachers complained; now, it is grown to bishops, archbishops, and cathedral churches, to the overthrow of the established order, and to the queen's authority in causes ecclesiastical." If the divinity of bishops was denied, could the divinity of monarchs be far behind? Elizabeth's reaction was to growl that these Puritans "did not wish to recognize either God or the king," but she dared not destroy her loyal Puritans, their provoking ardor and arrogant defiance notwithstanding, for at the other end of the religious scale an even more dangerous phenomenon was beginning to be seen - the Jesuit.

Ignatius Loyola made his first recorded appearance in history

as a "bold and defiant" court delinquent, "armed with sword and pistol," who had come to the attention of the authorities for brawling in the streets and molesting women during the carnival season of 1515. In the words of his indictment, he was "perfidious, brutal, vindictive." Loyola described the depravity of his youth in somewhat less harsh but nevertheless sufficiently damning terms. "Up to my twenty-sixth year, I was entirely given up to the vanities of the world and felt a keen and empty craving to excel." Loyola was born in 1491, the product of a Spanish aristocratic and chivalric tradition that had already degenerated into pride of caste, license to brawl, and an excuse for idleness. The unique quality that this empty-headed young man possessed was insatiable ambition, a driving desire to excel as a bravo, a warrior, and a leader of men. He had been placed through family influence as a page at the royal palace at Arevalo, where tournaments were the routine amusements of life. Gorgeously arrayed youths thrust and hacked at one another with blunted swords and lances while gaily attired damsels cheered their gallants on. When his patron at court fell from royal favor, Loyola suddenly found himself the victim of a palace upheaval. His career as a court parasite in jeopardy, he turned to soldiering and was stationed on the barren, mountainous frontier between Spain and France.

As a palace page, Loyola had perceived a basic truth about worldly power: Success in society depended on influence and on the ability to control men and women in high office. In the frontier province of Navarre, he learned another lesson: Grinding discipline and unthinking obedience were essential to any military organization. Realization of the facts of sixteenth-century life did not, however, diminish his ambition; the courtier-soldier still yearned to achieve chivalric renown and splash the name of Loyola across the length and breadth of Europe. His chance came in May 1521, when war broke out between Emperor Charles V and Francis I of France. What followed was a nightmare: Instead of glory and honor came defeat and horror. The young knight was crippled by the engines of modern war, his leg smashed by a cannonball. Knightly heroism proved itself to be no match for modern science, and Loyola found himself a prisoner of the sickroom, his military career shattered along with his injured leg. A limping knight was out of the question, for chivalric heroes could not be allowed to hobble. Loyola endured a

living hell to overcome the results of his injury; his leg was rebroken and reset, part of the bone was sawed off, and he suffered for weeks lying on an orthopedic rack in order to stretch the shrunken limb back to its proper size. No matter what the cost, he felt he had to avoid deformity, and he set his mind and soul to willing himself whole again.

From the torture of the rack and the surgeon's saw, he moved into the deadly tedium of convalescence. He daydreamed for hours, trying to capture in imagination the sight of flashing armor, the scent of perfumed ladies, and the sound of clashing swords. He became so bored that he was even reduced to reading, and he called for the *Amadis de Gaula*, the book of courtly love, to help his imagination. Unfortunately, the castle of Loyola possessed but two books - Ludolphus of Saxony's *Life of Christ* and a collection of legends about the lives of the saints. With intense distaste, he read about saintly suffering and degrading humility while longing for tales of heroism and romance. In his desperation, he tried to think of saints as knights of God, and suddenly a new world opened: The deeds of saints became equal to the grandest feats of knightly arms, and he pictured himself as a valiant knight in the service of Christ. As he lay in bed dreaming about the exploits of Saint Francis and Saint Dominic, Loyola yearned to cast aside sword and armor and don cowl and girdle to do battle for Christ. The enemy was no longer a French invader or a rival knight but Satan himself and his host of demons, and the court maidens seemed insignificant in contrast to the queen of heaven for whom Loyola longed to do heroic deeds.

He had become in his imagination a crusader in the old medieval tradition. If he was too deformed and crippled to fight for fair princesses and feudal lords, he could at least slay satanic dragons in honor of God. He determined to make the name of Loyola ring through the halls of time as the champion of the heavenly kingdom. The moment he could walk, he donned beggar's garb and went to Manresa, a tiny village in Catalonia, where he lived in a cave, practicing the art of sainthood as it was vividly depicted in early Christian literature. He knelt in prayer for seven hours a day and whipped and mortified his body. He wore a belt made of wire and a shirt woven with iron barbs, and he slept on the floor of the cave at night and fasted during the day. When he came down from his cave to beg in the village, even the beggars in

the street called him Father Sack, so thin and filthy had he become.

In the midst of his suffering, Loyola made a terrifying discovery: The strength that sustained him and the will that endured months of self-inflicted torture came not from God but from his own satanic pride. He knew that he sought martyrdom on earth to be great in heaven and desired to excel at saintliness in order to achieve recognition from God and man. The miracle of his conversion, the final consequence of those endless nights of torture in which he came to see the truth within himself, was the purgation of his pride and dedication of his will power to the service of God. He became the drill sergeant of his own soul. His will, once it had been purged of pride, became master of his reason, of his emotions, and above all, of his imagination. Loyola discovered that imagination, disciplined by an iron resolution, could move mountains and change darkness into light.

When he emerged from his ordeal, he was as much an instrument of the Lord as was John Calvin, but there was a vital difference between them. Loyola was not, like Calvin, an empty vessel filled with God's grace; he was a mortal man who by the sheer magnitude of his will had set out to be a saint and meet God halfway. He had drilled his imagination, analyzed his conscience, scrutinized and inspected his soul, and regimented his body. The novice was now ready to join the ranks and do battle for the kingdom of heaven. Only the problem of finding, training, and organizing his spiritual recruits remained; to this end he set about writing the greatest of all do-it-yourself books, his *Spiritual Exercises,* in which the initiate is told, step by step, how to exercise his will. The book is one of the most powerful and perceptive ventures into psychoanalysis ever written, describing in detail how the recruit might harness and discipline all his senses in order to sharpen his imagination to the point where fantasy and reality would become one. The *Exercises* were divided into four steps, or weeks, during which the recruit moved from a general examination of his conscience to an intense meditation on sin and its punishment in hell, and on the miracle of Christ's life.

The method was emotional and physical rather than intellectual. By an act of will, the novice imagined himself to hang in agony upon the cross, to taste the bread and the fish

that Jesus delivered to the people, to sit with the disciples at the Last Supper, and to visualize Christ as the king of heaven enthroned in His majesty and directing His armies against Satan. Throughout the *Exercises*, Loyola insisted that every sense be controlled by the imagination. "It will be necessary," he explained, "to see in imagination the length, breadth, and depth of hell. . . . to beg for a deep sense of the pain which the lost suffer. . . . to see the vast fires and the souls enclosed, as it were, in bodies of fire; to hear the wailing, the howling, cries and blasphemies against Christ our Lord. . . . with the sense of smell to perceive the smoke, the sulphur, the filth, and corruption; to taste the bitterness of tears, sadness, and remorse of conscience; with the sense of touch to feel the flames which envelop and burn the souls."

The *Exercises* was not written to be read as literature, but rather to be studied as a manual of instruction in preparation for action on the battlefield, and from the start Loyola's methods met with violent opposition from the Church he sought to serve. Ecclesiastical authorities were alarmed by the hint of hysteria evident in his system of spiritual analysis. His converts suffered convulsions and fainting spells; they endured moments of suicidal depression and captures bordering on madness. More serious, Loyola's doctrine of absolute free will rested as uncomfortably upon the shoulders of Catholic theology as did Luther's thesis of the bondage of the human will and the sovereign power of divine grace. The Church remained darkly suspicious of Loyola's assertion that he could discover God whenever he wished and that, "as the body can be exercised by going, walking, and running, so the will of man can be trained by exercises to find the will of God."

At the age of thirty-three, Loyola was forced to conclude that if he was to lead anything other than a rabble of repentant prostitutes and idle and disappointed wives of the rich, he would have to return to school in order to meet and catch the men who had the strength to wield the sword of Christ. He started at the beginning, joining children to memorize lists of Latin words and learn basic grammar. Each step in his education led him to recognize the need for further learning, and in 1527, in his thirty-seventh year, he left his native Spain to study at the University of Paris.

Loyola shared a room with the gentle and scholarly Pierre

Lefèvre and the handsome and athletic Francis Xavier. Both men were his junior by at least a dozen years, and both were ideally suited as recruits and lieutenants in the army of Christ if only Loyola could stimulate their interest and inveigle them into reading the *Exercises.* With Lefèvre, the conquest was easy. By careful and quiet scrutiny Loyola discerned that behind the mind of this young Aristotelian philosopher there lingered the spirit of a superstitious Savoyard cowherd. Lefèvre started out teaching his elderly and untutored roommate the secrets of scholastic logic and ended by becoming a convert to the *Spiritual Exercises.*

With Francis Xavier, the problem was more difficult, for the quarry was warier . Moreover, the dice-throwing sword-player Xavier had nothing but distaste for his Bible-reading, limping roommate. Loyola, however, won the younger man's respect by his learning and gained his love by his generosity, and in the end, Xavier was induced to partake of the *Spiritual Exercises.* By 1531, the leader had two converts, and together they posted upon the door of their bedroom a picture of Jesus. By 1534, six disciples had been trapped by a saint who possessed the cunning of a soldier and the tact of a courtier. One he caught in the morning after a night of debauchery, another he captured by the force of his words, and still another he led into a friendly game of dice, the loser pledging to take the *Exercises.* From the start, Loyola adopted two controversial doctrines, which were to characterize the Society: The end justifies the means, and be all things to all men.

Armies of seven are rarely more than bands of fanatics or idealists. Yet in the case of Loyola and his followers, quality somehow made up for quantity, for these seven were men of steel. They left Paris and dedicated themselves to the service of the pope and the Catholic Church. Somewhat hesitantly, Pope Paul III accepted these naïve but magnificently trained and enthusiastic champions, and on September 27, 1540, he blessed the foundation of the order of the Society of Jesus and named Loyola as its first general. The aim of the new organization was clear - to restore the medieval Church to the position of uncontested spiritual and political power that it had enjoyed in the thirteenth century. If the aim was medieval, the means were modern. The Jesuits were no medieval monastic order serving God by renouncing this world and retreating into a monastery. They were a military

company in which every facet of life and every intellectual premise was subordinated to efficiency. The Jesuit ideal was the creation of a military corps in perfect fighting trim, a force in which every man would be ready to believe, if necessary, that "what seems black is white if the hierarchical Church so teaches." Every recruit was "like a corpse, which can be turned this way or that . . . or a ball of wax that might be moulded in any form." Jesuits wore no special habit but dressed to suit the needs of the occasion. They did not spend their days in contemplation and prayer, but trained their minds and steeled their hearts to meet and defeat all men on their own terms. Jesuits were expected to talk finance to the Fuggers, scholarship to the intellectuals, politics to the ministers of state, and military tactics to the generals. They were ordered not to shun the world of riches and power politics, but to join battle with Satan by becoming the confessors of the great and mighty. Loyola knew from early experience that power over the souls of the influential few was more useful than the support of the masses in the war against evil. Deliberately and with calculated results, Jesuits set out to control the confessional of kings, the education of princes, and the minds of the men and women who counted.

At the same time that Loyola sought to place his disciples in the councils of the monarchs of Europe, he turned his attention to the organization of social welfare on a scale unheard of in the past. He sought to stamp out pauperism, prostitution, unemployment, and famine. In every major city of Europe, Loyola established an office to coordinate begging, find jobs for the unemployed, and urge the local community to build homes for the old and infirm. For the first time, the problem of human suffering was being attacked on a rational and organized scale.

The institution that slowly evolved during the 1540s and 1550s was carefully designed to fight social evil, to counter the monster of heresy, to reconquer Europe for the Roman fold, and to win new converts throughout the globe. The growth of the order was spectacular; in four years Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, and the Netherlands had Jesuit cells, and by the time Loyola died in 1556, the Society had grown from seven members to an elite and highly trained following of 1,500 men, who were organized in twelve provinces and sixty-five residences in most of the major cities of Europe. In every case, recruits were selected for their

effectiveness as soldiers of God. Loyola once told his secretary that "in those who offered themselves" he looked "less to purely natural goodness than to firmness of character and ability for business," for he was of the opinion that "those who were not fit for public business were not adapted for filling offices in the Society."

By 1556, the order had become a world power: Jesuits heard confession in the most august courts of Europe, sat amidst the privy councils of kings, and maintained their representatives at the Imperial Diet in Germany. They held distinguished positions in the universities of the Continent, where they exercised control over the shaping of young minds. They whispered advice to Philip of Spain and Catherine de Médicis of France, and they were feared and detested by Protestants, who viewed them as Satan's most pernicious instrument. By the time Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558, the tide of Protestant victory had begun to ebb. Before long, central Europe was made safe for Catholicism, and the Protestant heresy was contained and limited to a northern arc of Europe extending from Prussia and Sweden through the Netherlands to England. By 1585, the religious struggle had been carried into the enemy camp; Antwerp had returned to the Catholic fold, Holland was under attack, and England itself was exposed to Catholic invasion and conversion. In each case, Jesuit leadership stood behind Catholic resurgence.

Outside Europe, Jesuit missionaries were on the move, carrying Christianity to the Far East, America, and Africa. Only two years after the Society was founded, Loyola sent his most trusted lieutenant, Francis Xavier, to India. In May 1542, Xavier arrived in Goa, the rich trading center of the Portuguese East Indian empire. He was made vicar of all the lands washed by the Indian Ocean, with a potential flock of millions upon millions of souls who might yet be saved. Arabs, Hindus, Gujarats, and Persians, speaking a host of different languages, following false prophets or worshiping graven images, all awaited the coming of God's Word, if only it could be made comprehensible to their heathen ears and minds. Xavier began the task of learning the babble of Eastern tongues, of explaining the message of Christ, of meeting every kind and manner of man, and of urging them to come to him with their troubles and accept him as their confessor. From Goa, with its Kafir slaves and Portuguese

hidalgos, he moved to the pearl fisheries of Kerala, where simple folk who worshiped fire demons and serpents were struck by his black gown and monk's cowl and listened to his clanging bell and the few words of Tamil that he had mastered. The entire East lay before him, and Xavier was not one to tarry when the hordes of China and Japan had yet to hear his message. Thousands of Japanese received his blessings, but he never reached China, for as he prepared to sail to Canton he was struck down with fever and died, a single soldier who had given his life to the greater glory of God - *ad majorem dei gloriam.*

To the greater glory of God was the secret of Jesuit power. It was the grossest kind of blasphemy to the Calvinist, for the doctrine presumed that man's efforts could add to or detract from God's glory; nevertheless it was the source of the vitality that led Xavier ever eastward and enabled Loyola to shoulder enormous administrative labors. Loyola's headquarters consisted of three cells in a Roman slum. He worked twenty hours a day at a wooden trestle table and slept on a cot. He subsisted on chestnuts, bread, and water, never finding the leisure to sit down and eat a meal. All day he read reports, answered letters, and issued precise military communiqués, for each of his lieutenants reported to him in writing upon every particular of his life and the lives of those who served under him, and subordinates were expected to comment upon the success and quality of their superiors. Loyola became an administrative machine in absolute control of himself and of his army of spiritual soldiers. There was no time for contemplation, for friendship, or for humanity, for he had willed himself to become a saint and in doing so he ceased to be human. The ranks of the sanctified had been joined by a "saint of will."

Loyola was born Spanish and he stamped his creation with his Iberian personality. In turn the Society of Jesus branded the entire Catholic Counter-Reformation with its proselytizing zeal, its efficiency, its insistence on quick action, and its creed that, in the name of God, the end justifies the means. The energy of the Jesuits was symptomatic of the new vigor that was becoming manifest throughout Catholicism. A steeling of the soul, a formulation of fundamental doctrine, and a sharpening of the weapons to destroy diversity of thought and faith were evident in every phase of the Catholic revival. The medieval inquisition, that sharp-eyed shepherd against

the wolf of heresy, was re-established in Spain in 1478, in the Netherlands in 1523, and in Italy in 1542. The quality of the new leadership and the spirit of the inquisition were summed up in the words of an inquisitor who coldly stated: "It is no great matter whether they that die on account of religion be guilty or innocent, provided we terrify the people by such examples."

In 1545, Catholicism met in religious council to reform the Church and clarify the creed. The labors of the Council of Trent lasted on and off for eighteen years. Controlled by papal interests and later guided by Jesuit and Spanish leadership, its final pronouncement was a clear and unified statement of what the believer must profess in order to be numbered among the Catholic fold. Good works and faith and the seven sacraments were proclaimed to be the sole road to man's salvation. The Council further announced that only the Catholic Church held the keys to the kingdom of heaven and that the priesthood possessed supernatural powers transmitted directly from Christ. Latin was named the language of prayer and worship; the Church was made the interpreter and arbiter of the Bible; celibacy of the clergy was insisted upon; monasticism was pronounced to be the high road to salvation and the noblest attainment of mankind; and the existence of a celestial hierarchy of saints and angels was restated. As a final measure of defense, an Index of prohibited books was established in order to protect the minds of future generations against the poison of heresy and unorthodoxy.

On both sides, extremism was triumphant; the faith was prescribed and the faint of heart proscribed. In England, Catholics were now told that religion stood higher than duty to the queen; one Catholic voiced the spirit of the rejuvenated Church when he said: "If I heard that the entire destruction of England was for the greater glory of God and the welfare of Christianity, I should be glad of it being done." In 1568, William Allen established an English college in Flanders in order to train missionaries for the dangerous work of re-catholicizing England and bringing hope and renewed strength to those believers who still clung to their ancient faith. Six years later, the first three missionaries arrived in the country; by 1578, their number had risen to fifty and by 1580 there were over 100. The Catholic revival in England received still further impetus with the arrival of the Jesuits led

by Edmund Campion and Robert Parsons. Their charge was "to preach the gospel, to minister the sacraments, to instruct the simple, to reform sinners, [and] to confute errors."

Whether the Jesuits, who were smuggled into the realm, were, in fact, traitors - fifth columnists sent to destroy the Protestant Jezebel and to incite regicide - is difficult to judge. Officially, the order preached obedience even to heretical sovereigns, but as revolution was implicit in the militant creed of John Calvin, so sedition was inherent in the Jesuit judgment that matters of faith stood higher than the concerns of daily life and that the spiritual end justified the material means. When Campion was caught and then dismembered in the name of state security and political orthodoxy, he died blessing Elizabeth - "your queen and mine"; but Robert Parsons was a professional revolutionist, and his fine touch discernible in almost every plot to overthrow Elizabeth.

Throughout Europe, Calvinist and Jesuit were setting the pace. Each represented a supra-national creed enforced by a militant, international organization. Both were politically and socially dangerous movements, for neither recognized the limitations of common sense or common decency, and each was a haven for men, some deeply pious, others viciously evil, who enjoyed extreme action, whether it be raping nuns in the name of religion or torturing men with rack and fire for the sake of their souls. The Puritan and the Jesuit were strangely alike. Father Gerard, a Jesuit missionary in England, was an outlawed and hunted man. Once, in search of a hiding place, he came to the country house of an English Catholic only a few hours ahead of the law. At great risk to himself, his host offered Gerard sanctuary; as he led him up the stairs to a place of concealment, the hunted priest saw on the landing a stained-glass window in which was depicted a naked Venus. In outraged righteousness, Gerard put his fist through the window and shouted that the sight of such nudity was blasphemous to God. The normal dictates of courtesy were not sufficient to restrain the man possessed of Truth.

Ignatius Jourdain was a Puritan member of the Elizabethan House of Commons and a merchant from Exeter. He was returning to his city in company with another Member of Parliament, who invited him to lodge the night at his manor house. Jourdain's host was a country gentleman addicted to profanity, and the godly Puritan accepted the invitation only

on condition that the squire, his wife, and servants refrain from using bad language in his presence, and that there be a godly sermon both at the parish church in the morning and at the manor house in the afternoon. Again the limits of hospitality were being strained by a man eaten up by the zeal of his faith. The similarity between the two extremes did not go unnoticed in the sixteenth century, and it was that "wisest fool in Christendom" and coiner of bons mots, James of Scotland, who noted that "one Puritan presbyter equals one papist priest." Both Elizabeth of England and Catherine de Médicis of France would have agreed fervently, though Philip of Spain undoubtedly would have missed the point.

V

THE ORDEAL OF FRANCE

A jousting knight at a festive tournament did for the Holy Roman Emperor what all his armed men had been unable to accomplish during forty years of Hapsburg-Valois rivalry: He destroyed France as an international power. On June 30, 1559, the broken lance of a jousting opponent pushed through the royal armor and severely injured the brain of Henry II of France. In ten days, the king was dead. Three years later, France was torn by the first of nine monstrous civil and religious wars, during which the kingdom was scourged by foreign and private armies that burned, maimed, and tortured in the name of divine justice. For almost forty years, France was to bleed until humanity became so sickened at the sight of butchery that "peace without God" seemed preferable to "war for Him." During the ordeal, religious paranoia and the actions of desperate men strained to the breaking point the bonds of political stability, but France was destroyed not so much by religious anarchy, which was common to all Europe, as by the rot that was eating away the heart of the French monarchy. In 1533, the Valois dynasty was united with the equally decadent Italian House of Medici. The consequences were fatal: The union produced the four ailing and degenerate sons of Henry Valois and Catherine de Médicis.

Catherine de Médicis was born in 1519, the year Charles V of Spain was elected Holy Roman Emperor. An orphan at five days and from birth a pawn in the diplomatic designs of her Medici cousin Pope Clement VII, Catherine was raised in the spirit of the Italian Renaissance, where patience and calculation were the qualities most likely to ensure survival. At eight, she was swept up in the Florentine revolution, and her fate was openly debated by the city fathers, some of whom suggested that she be chained naked to the city walls and raped by the republican soldiers. Catherine survived the revolution with her virginity intact and her matrimonial usefulness to the pope unmarred, and in 1533, Francis I of France was lured into accepting Clement's fourteen-year-old ward as the bride of his second son, Henry, the Duke of Orleans. Within months of the marriage, it became painfully apparent that the French monarch had bought an Italian pig in a poke. The Holy Father had no intention of living up to his side of the bargain and risking war with the emperor to win Milan, Parma, and Urbino for France. Without these cities, Catherine had nothing to her credit, not even noble blood;

from the start, the marriage was regarded as a misalliance and the princess looked upon as a Florentine shopkeeper's granddaughter. When her husband became heir apparent in 1536, Catherine's position at court worsened. Henry became infatuated with the lovely Diane de Poitiers, and the princess continued to lack fecundity; the one quality that might have compensated for her bourgeois vulgarity.

For ten years, Catherine was tolerated, and for ten years, she remained barren. Then, beginning in 1544, she became a mother seven times over, giving birth in rapid succession to Francis, Elizabeth, Claude, Charles, Henry, Margaret, and Hercules (who was rechristened Francis after the death of his older brother). Eventually, an extraordinary trinity evolved: the slow-witted and obstinate royal husband, his sorceress-mistress who at fifty retained the looks of a Venus, and Catherine, the queen. Diane de Poitiers's domain was the king's bedchamber, from which she wielded immense political power; Catherine ran the household and had to be content with turning the court into "a veritable earthly paradise," where, exclaimed one ecstatic admirer, ladies shone "like stars in the sky on a fine night." Like most earthly paradises, this one was not perfect. Henry II was indecisive and easily influenced, the treasury was empty, and the court was torn by aristocratic factiousness that verged on anarchy.

The lengthy struggle between France and the empire had made a mockery of royal finances, and by 1559, both Valois France and Hapsburg Spain were bankrupt. The peace between them, signed at Cateau-Cambrésis, was diplomatic recognition of the fact that not even the riches of the Spanish Indies or the suffering of French peasants could continue to finance wars that were beginning to approach modern dimensions. By mid-century, cannons that had formerly measured three to four feet had grown into ten- and twenty-foot monsters and had to be drawn by teams of twenty horses. Armies had swollen to 60,000 and 80,000 soldiers - insatiable beasts compared to the companies of knights and bowmen who had fought at Agincourt and Crécy. At the battle of St. Quentin, in 1557, a Spanish force of 60,000 men smashed a French army of equal size, leaving 3,000 Frenchmen dead on the field and taking 6,000 prisoners. It was this defeat that induced France to sue for peace and Spain to accept the offer in 1559, for neither country could continue financing wars that were costing 300,000 livres a

month. When Henry II of France died, his treasury was faltering under a war debt of 40 million livres. Theoretically, the crown's income came to 12 million livres annually, but its actual income was probably only half that sum, and the interest owed on the royal debt, which varied between 12 and 16 percent, consumed every available sou.

On the principle that the King of France could tax as much as he wanted, the main French source of revenues, the taille, rose steadily until peasants fled their land or feigned poverty, and merchants and artisans saw their profits eaten up by wars that benefited only the nobility. Even so, the sums collected did not suffice, and the king turned to selling existing offices and creating new ones for future sale. This prevented a complete financial collapse, but it cost the crown its control over the administrative and judicial organs of state. Purchasers of offices could not be dismissed easily, and they regarded their posts as profitable, private sinecures, not *as* public trusts. Courtiers sold influence, judges sold justice, and bureaucrats sold favors. Rogues grew rich, upright men were disgusted, and almost everybody lost confidence in a government that was rapidly moving from mere inefficiency into blatant corruption.

Economic nemesis descended in 1557, when not even 18 percent interest rates could tempt international bankers to rescue the French crown, and Henry had to break his most solemn and regal promise and declare himself bankrupt. In the wake of fiscal chaos came a political crisis that attacked the basis of royal power, for the class worst hit by the economic crash was that section of society traditionally most loyal to the crown - the lesser nobility. Throughout the century, wartime deficit spending and the wealth of the New World, coming into Europe by way of Spain, had been producing an inflationary cycle: the value of the livre dropped 50 percent, and rents from land failed to keep abreast of the rising cost of living. Social pressure required nobles to maintain lavish hospitality and wear costly apparel, and men and women were known to carry their entire estates on their backs. In the past, war had provided a form of outdoor relief for the nobility, but in 1559, peace came, and they were overwhelmed by the clamor of their creditors. In desperation, they turned away from a bankrupt monarchy and toward the great feudal magnates instead.

The most dangerous of all social partnerships was taking shape: The great lords, already restless under the crown and bristling with family vanity, were being joined by lesser folk who looked to them for protection and in return were willing to man their private armies, wear their livery, and support their feudal brawling. The age of liveried retainers and baronial warlords had returned to France. The Duke of Montmorency, constable of France, arrived at court in 1560 with 800 horsemen, and in an emergency, he was able to muster twice that number. The Duke of Guise was recognized as an uncrowned king, so great was his feudal and political following; and the House of Navarre controlled the allegiance of a host of vassals who would provide military service if it became necessary. Even the king's own army, which had a nominal strength of 12,000 cavalrymen and 16,000 infantry, was little more than a conglomeration of feudal retainers, supported by royal taxes but wearing the uniform of various commanders who regarded the troops under their control as their personal henchmen.

High society and the political configurations at court were dominated by three private dynasties - *Guise, Bourbon, and Montmorency. The insatiable* pride of the Guises was accepted as appropriate to their exalted position in baronial society, and their irresponsibility was excused because they were descended from Saint Louis and Charlemagne. They were possessed of immense feudal holdings, scattered gleanings from the great days of the dukes of Burgundy situated along the borders of France, the Lowlands, and the empire. The family included two cardinals, a queen regent of Scotland, a grand prior of France, and François, the Duke of Guise, perhaps the most distinguished soldier of the day. Fear of the other great lords had led the French crown to favor the partly foreign and princely dynasty of Guise, and François and his brother Charles, cardinal of Lorraine, were dominant figures at the court of Henry II. Cultured and devious, Charles aspired to wear a papal tiara while his brother grasped at the crown of France.

Equally dangerous but less brilliant than the Guises were the Bourbons, heirs to the Valois throne in the unlikely eventuality that all four of Henry's sons should die without issue – as, indeed, they did in time. The titular chief of the clan was Anthony of Navarre, a man possessed of little except his royal blood and an aggressively Calvinist wife whose

dearest wish was to convert her husband. The hot-headed leader of the family was Anthony's younger brother, Louis, the Prince of Condé, a hunchbacked, belligerent, and penurious young man who had nothing to lose and everything to gain from conspiracy and rebellion. Hatred of the Guises, not conviction, drove Condé into the Calvinist camp, and his conversion to the new faith inaugurated in France the dangerous union of baronial gangsterism and spiritual discontent.

The Montmorencys were government aristocrats, servants of the crown. The entire family held high office: Anne, the Duke of Montmorency, was constable of France; his son François was marshal of the kingdom, governor of Paris, and lieutenant general of the Ile-de-France; another son, Henry, count of Damville, became governor and uncrowned King of Languedoc; and Gaspard de Coligny, his nephew, was admiral of France. Their house was religiously divided: the constable remained a devout Catholic, his nephew, the admiral, a rough, masterful, Bible-quoting man, became an equally staunch Huguenot.

The entire realm was divided among the three families, and scarcely a gentleman of France was not in some way beholden to one or another of them for a pension, a sinecure at court, a suit favorably settled at law, or a marriage with a fat dowry. At Paris, that "sun and moon of France," the baronial chieftains met in the glitter of Catherine de Médicis's *court, where the constable advised peace with Spain,* the Duke of Guise counseled war, and the Bourbons fluttered aimlessly, urging nothing but their distinguished rank and princely blood. As the years passed, it became apparent that the Guises were gaining the upper hand. Mary Stuart, that delightful child Queen of Scotland, was a niece of the Guise brothers, and her marriage to the heir apparent of France was a major victory for their house. François alone of the great barons of the court had escaped defeat during the war with Spain and England and emerged in 1558 as the liberator of Calais from three centuries of English tyranny. Unexpectedly the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis brought the Guises to the zenith of their power; for it was during a tournament held in honor of the Peace and wedding of the king's daughter Elizabeth to Philip of Spain that Henry II received the fatal splinter.

For a year, the Guises ruled through Mary Queen of Scots, who had become Queen of France upon Henry's death, and through her fifteen-year-old husband, Francis II, who did what his wife's uncles told him to do. The dowager queen, Catherine de Médicis, was even more in eclipse than before, and the Bourbon and Montmorency factions were eased out of important positions at court. The cardinal was a consummate diplomat and politician and the duke a splendid soldier, but neither was a statesman capable of rising above family and factional concerns.

They rapidly became unpopular throughout the country and were held responsible for all the evils besetting France. Worse yet, they drove the Huguenot minority to desperation, for the duke, if not his brother, clamored for the blood of the heretics and the absolute triumph of the Catholic Church. If necessary, he said, he "was quite ready to sacrifice his life for that purpose." Guise's words were prophetic. In 1563, he was struck down by a Protestant assassin, and almost thirty-five years of bloodshed were necessary to assure the victory of Catholicism.

By 1560, Calvinism in France had reached danger*ous proportions. Overtaxed merchants, underpaid* bureaucrats, bankrupt noblemen, and disgruntled princes of the blood all found outlets for their disenchantment in the Huguenot faith. With the government crippled by dissension, ruinous inflation, and mounting violence, provincial feudalism began to merge with the hierarchical organization of the Huguenot Church. Each Huguenot consistory had its feudal patron who acted as captain and defender of the flock, each colloquy or presbytery had its great nobleman and colonel, and each provincial synod had its *chef général*. On all sides - at court, in the country, and in the hearts of men - there was a steadily growing willingness to risk civil war and revolution. That war did not, in fact, break out in 1560 was the result of accident, for just when the controversies between Guises and Bourbons and Catholics and Huguenots were spilling over into armed action, the young king, Francis II, died of an abscessed ear, and the government was taken over by Catherine de Médicis as regent for her nine-year-old son, Charles IX. Patience, cunning, and the sickness of her Valois offspring had finally given the queen what her bourgeois heart had long coveted above all else - political power.

Catherine de Médicis was no beauty. She inherited most of the least enviable characteristics of her family: bulging eyes, heavy lips, greasy skin, a sharp and sloping nose, spreading hips, a ravenous appetite, and a passion for intrigue. "A lady of masculine proportions," a contemporary called her. Yet she had great charm and zest. She doted on court gossip, had a passion for grand receptions and bustling activity, and built exquisite palaces and filled them with all the sumptuous gaiety that only regal rank and mercantile private means could afford. She ate prodigiously and suffered from gout and indigestion, but "she exercised enough for two," loved to dance, shoot, and hunt, and she was the first lady to ride sidesaddle with a leg hooked around the pommel instead of sitting sacklike with both feet resting on a board placed against the horse's flank. She rode far and fast and surrounded herself with forty to fifty maids of honor, her notorious *escadron volant* of court beauties who excelled in equestrian style as well as in the gorgeousness of their apparel. Catherine knew well how to use sex to her advantage, and her flying squadron of lovely and approachable goddesses was one of her most effective political weapons.

Catherine, as her enemies took pleasure in pointing out, owed her wealth to trade and her birth to Italy. The cabinet of deadly poisons and love potions that she was rumored to possess never actually existed, but to the English and French Catherine's birthplace remained by reputation the land of Machiavellian devilry, what the English satirist Thomas Nashe described as "the academy of manslaughter, the sporting place of murder, the apothecary shop of poison for all nations." The new regent was undoubtedly an admirer of Machiavellian diplomacy, but her deviousness was always mitigated and often negated by her motherly approach to politics. She delighted in power, but loved gossip even more; she endeavored to preserve the integrity of France, but doted on her children above all other interests. She was, as the Venetian ambassador said, "a clear and intelligent businesswoman," but she could always be enticed by the promise of a crown or a kingdom for one of her many offspring. She invariably confused principles of state with palace politics, and she ruled by a policy of calculated indiscretions mixed with the artless flutterings of a mother hen.

Catherine was a tireless but ineffectual political and diplomatic manipulator, for she never really understood the quality of her opponents. She brilliantly maneuvered to grasp the regency on the death of her eldest son and jockeyed both Guise and Bourbon into accepting her control over the government of Charles IX, but her idea of ruling France was to move her couch into the king's bedchamber. What could not be solved by a bedside chat, a midnight supper, the suggestion of perfume, or the hint of marriage was beyond her intelligence. Her statesmanship tended to be little more than cloying maternalism, her boundless energy was no substitute for real ability, and her methods, though rational, were invariably shortsighted.

In December 1560, however, it appeared as if Catherine might, indeed, be the savior of the kingdom and do for France what Elizabeth was doing for England - persuade court factions and rival religions to live in peace. Catherine was more experienced than her regal sister across the Channel, but she was a dowdy middle-aged forty-one compared to Elizabeth's vital twenty-seven; she was a foreigner and a plebeian; and, most important of all, she never possessed the magic that could melt the chilly heart of treason, charm Catholics and Protestants into contentment, and envelop every action in the mantle of greatness. Nevertheless she accomplished a miracle: She persuaded Anthony of Bourbon to renounce his claim as the ranking prince of the blood and forego the regency; she argued the Duke of Guise into remaining at court and accepting "a policy of pity" toward the Calvinists; and she brought Huguenots and Catholics together in a national conference to establish a doctrinal solution that would be acceptable to both faiths. Even Henry of Navarre, whose success was so closely dependent upon the frustration of Catherine's dynastic dreams and who ultimately replaced her three Valois sons upon the thrones of France, wondered what the poor woman could "have done with her husband dead and five small children upon her hands, and two families, our own and the Guises, who were scheming to seize the throne." Navarre and many later observers agreed that Catherine de Médicis might, indeed, have done worse.

The queen's purpose was to pour balm on troubled consciences and smooth the ruffled pride of courtiers. Unfortunately, she lacked the authority and the magnetism to maintain her influence over a quarreling court, and her "policy

of pity" was little more than a clever stopgap, devoid of principle and reflecting only political necessity. Calvinists and Catholics throughout Europe maintained without reservation the creed: "one doctrine, one discipline, one religion." They merely quarreled over the content of such a monolithic faith. The queen regent's willingness to compromise on points of faith had all the disadvantages of a policy of appeasement. The Huguenots did not want concessions; they demanded total victory, and they viewed the end of persecution and the crown's effort to achieve a broad theological solution as signs of weakness and as an invitation to make further demands.

The results of the religious conference were disastrous, for the Huguenots claimed victory for themselves and promptly increased their demands. They had discussed theology on equal terms with bishops, and they now demanded the right to worship on equal terms with Catholics. In every bailiwick and town of France, the Huguenot Church moved into the open, proving itself to be just as bigoted as the intolerance against which it was rebelling. At Castres in 1560, Calvinists had been a tiny, persecuted, and imprisoned minority, holding their services in secret and enduring the fury of the populace. In February 1561, by government order all Protestants were liberated from jail; by April, they were holding services in public before audiences of 600; by the end of the month, academy students from Geneva were flocking into the town; on June 5, Protestants for the first time dared ignore the order to decorate their houses in honor of Corpus Christi Day; in August, the first Huguenot funeral service took place; in September, elections gave the Calvinists control over the city government; and in October, both Catholic and Protestant services were being held in all the town churches.

The crisis at Castres came in December and January. Friar Claude d'Oraison was preaching when a fervent Protestant in the congregation shouted that he was a liar. The Huguenot was promptly hustled out of church, but that same evening his co-religionists in the town took up arms, seized the friar, and expelled him from the district. On January 1, 1562, Catholicism was formally abolished, and in the following month, when a monk was discovered celebrating Mass in secret, he was seized, dressed in his sacerdotal robes, placed backward on a donkey, and paraded through the streets of Castres. The monk was then presented with a consecrated wafer and asked whether he was ready to die at the stake for

his idolatry. The poor man was not, and only his robes were consigned to the flames. Throughout France, a Huguenot dialectic was forming, and within five years, the young king, Charles IX, would have occasion to complain to Coligny: "Not so very long ago you were content with being tolerated by the Catholics, but now you demand equality! Soon you will want the power for yourselves alone, and will wish to drive us out of the country!" Except for the implied disloyalty to the person of the sovereign, most Huguenots in their hearts could not have denied the king's accusation.

If Catherine's moderation gave encouragement to the Protestants, it drove the Catholics to fury. For every Huguenot aggression, Catholics answered in kind. In Paris, when Calvinists pillaged the Church of St. Médard, enraged Catholics in turn burned the Protestant meeting house. Protestantism was so much in the ascendant at court that Catholics feared the queen mother and king himself might be won to the devil's cause. Mounting religious frenzy began to seize men's minds, destroying the power of custom, loosening the bonds of obedience, and elevating monsters of human cruelty and selfishness into instruments of God's purpose.

Exactly what Catherine had worked hardest to prevent was taking place: France was being polarized into two armed and hostile religious camps. In April 1561, Catholic factions overcame their differences, and Constable Montmorency and François, the Duke of Guise, joined forces in an effort to stem the Huguenot tide and save the French government from John Calvin. By October, each party - Huguenot and Catholic - was secretly making ready its weapons, and in March, the inevitable occurred: One of a series of appalling atrocities committed by partisans of both religions during the winter of 1562 exploded into civil war. On March 1, 200 horsemen under the command of the Duke of Guise discovered in a barn near Vassy, in the duke's domain, a band of some 500 Protestants at worship. Soldiers and churchgoers exchanged impassioned words; insults led to blows, and Guise was hit on the nose by a rock. At that moment, the soldiers unsheathed their swords, and the massacre of Vassy began. Reports vary, but probably about thirty Huguenots were killed and more than 100 were wounded. When word of the slaughter reached Paris, the hotheaded Huguenot Prince of Condé sent out a call to arms and war began.

The first civil war was the culmination of a steady drift toward violence. It broke out at that moment when it was easier to act than to think, to kill than to negotiate. In the provinces, anarchy went unchecked. Protestants were busy pillaging and profaning Catholic churches and putting idolaters to the sword. Catholics were equally brutal in their campaign against the poison of heresy. The governor of Guyenne, Blaise de Montluc, hanged every Huguenot who came his way and announced that "one man hanged is a better example than a hundred killed." Montluc typified the leaders on both sides - men who preferred to begin with the execution and argue the case afterward.

As early as 1559, the English ambassador Nicholas Throckmorton wrote Elizabeth: "Now is the time to spend money and it will never have been better spent." In 1562, the English decided the time to act had arrived; at Hampton Court, Elizabeth signed a treaty with *Coligny* and *Condé* to part with 100,000 crowns and to dispatch a 6,000-man army to support the Protestant cause in exchange for the port of Le Havre. At the end of the war, Le Havre was to be given back to France, and England was to get Calais. If the Huguenots were willing to sell the realm of France for the sake of the kingdom of God, and if the price were right, Gloriana was delighted to cooperate.

The war, however, decided nothing except that France would never go Protestant and that Elizabeth had underestimated the cost of intervention. The first civil war came to an end when the leaders of both sides were either killed or captured: Guise fell to the assassin's blade; Anthony was killed in battle; Condé and the Constable Montmorency were captured. On the principle that captives are reasonable peacemakers, Catherine urged Condé and Montmorency to negotiate peace, and a treaty between them was signed in March 1563. The results satisfied no one except the queen mother. Limited liberty of worship was accorded the Huguenots, a concession that infuriated the Catholics and failed to appease the Protestants; Calvinists were irritated by having their faith prohibited in the city of Paris; and the Guise family failed to obtain satisfaction for the death of François of Guise. They did have the doubtful pleasure of seeing his assassin, a fanatical young Huguenot nobleman, pulled to pieces by four wild horses; but they continued their personal vendetta against Coligny, whom they deemed morally responsible for the

murder.

The only positive result of the settlement was a lesson to Elizabeth of England not to meddle in French affairs. The moment peace was signed, Catherine gathered an army of 40,000 men and forty cannons and moved on Le Havre. If Queen Elizabeth, she said, would not return the city "to us willingly, God will enable us to take it by force." Gloriana never returned anything willingly, but in this case, the siege was short and the English defense of the city inglorious.

Victorious over Elizabeth, and with all her French generals either dead or humiliated, Catherine emerged as the sole victor of the war, but again her triumph proved hollow. The queen's solution to the ills that beset France was to set out in January 1564, on a triumphal progress. She traveled with her young son, who received the accolades of both Protestants and Catholics, and with her squadron of alluring goddesses, whose smiles, it was hoped, would banish the bitter memory of war. The full bankruptcy of Catherine's policy was revealed in the shallowness of her own words. "They all danced together," she told the Duchess of Guise, "Huguenots and papists alike, and so happily" that she had great hope of a permanent reconciliation.

Although Catholics and Protestants might dance together, they had, in fact, only one thing in common: the darkest suspicion of the queen mother. Hers was the fate of all inveterate schemers, for, as one English observer said, "she had too much wit for a woman, and too little honesty for a queen." Philip of Spain called her *Madame La Serpente* and wrote that he trusted "neither her leagues nor her marriages." Calumny and rumors, bred of distrust for an Italian queen, found ready audience in both religions. The queen, Catholics said, preferred heretics to faithful and godly subjects; she might at any moment barter the safety of the Catholic Church for the sake of a golden crown for one of her many children. Protestants whispered that she was planning to cut the throats of all god-fearing Huguenots, delaying only until they were lulled into a sense of security by her empty promises.

During the autumn of 1567, distrust led to the renewal of war that was to last with but one interruption for almost three years. The fury with which Frenchman tore at Frenchman was

worse than in the dreadful days of the Hundred Years War. Protestants stormed a Catholic monastery and forced the monks to hang each other; cities that had been induced to open their gates by the offer of honorable terms of surrender were put to the sword; at Orleans, Huguenot captives were burned en masse in prison by Catholic mobs; at Auxerre, crowds pulled to bits 150 Calvinists and threw the pieces into the sewer; at Foix, Protestants slaughtered 120 papists, and Catholics retaliated by killing 700 Calvinists. The temper of the times was epitomized by the revenge that Henry, the Duke of Guise, took when his enemy, the prince of Condé, was captured in battle and then killed. In retaliation for his father's murder, he ordered his men to place the prince's naked body on the back of a donkey and expose it to the public view. On both sides, men lived only for hatred, and so many unspeakable atrocities were committed that the Venetian ambassador wrote that he could not better describe the state of the kingdom "than by comparing it to a leg, an arm, or any other member attacked by gangrene; when the doctor, having cauterized a wound, thinks that his task is finished, he sees another one opening beside it."

Toleration was born in the horrors of war. For a few men, such as Montaigne, liberty of conscience became a principle and guide to life, but most Frenchmen adopted it from grim necessity. Slowly, in the face of barbarism and outrage, a small group of men determined that "a man does not cease to be a citizen for being excommunicated." A thousand times, Montaigne said, he had retired to bed expecting to be "betrayed or murdered before morning," hoping only that death, when it came, would be "done without terror or lingering" torture. Life was intolerable under such conditions, and merchants and nobles, peasants and artisans began to argue that secure homes were more important than quiet consciences, and the repose of the kingdom more desirable than the salvation of their souls. The politiques, as the disciples of such wisdom were called, grew in number with every act of vengeance and mayhem. Eventually, when enough men on both sides had demanded the end of war, peace was concluded at St. Germain in August 1570. The Catholics had triumphed in all battles, but the Protestants won the peace. Liberty of conscience and freedom of worship were assured to all Huguenots throughout the realm except in Paris and its environs; Protestants were made eligible for all

public offices, and they received as guarantees of the government's good faith the possession of four cities -La Rochelle, Montauban, Cognac, and La Charité. Catholics were horrified by the terms of the settlement, and Montluc complained that the enemy had everywhere been destroyed by force of arms but now had "triumphed by means of their diabolical writings."

Despite Catholic protests, Catherine was satisfied with the Peace of St. Germain, for it allowed her to pose as the leader of a new alliance of Catholic politiques and moderate Huguenots. In characteristic Medici fashion, she planned a series of marriages to win allies for her policies and crowns for her children. Her second son, Henry, the Duke of Anjou, was to marry that aging champion of Protestantism, the thirty-seven-year-old Elizabeth of England, and her daughter Margaret was designated as the bride of young Henry of Navarre, who was now titular head of the Huguenot party and the Bourbon heir to the throne.

The queen's ambassadors failed to come home with the virgin bride, even though they also offered Elizabeth Catherine's youngest son, the Duke of Alençon, when it became evident that she wasn't interested in the Duke of Anjou; but they did achieve a major diplomatic triumph when England gave up more than 300 years of cherished francophobia and joined France in a defensive alliance against Spain. The Treaty of Blois, in 1572, was a token of a fundamental change in the structure and balance of European diplomacy. As the power of France and the dynastic ambitions of monarchs receded, the might of Spain and the affairs of God loomed larger. Once, armies had marched as conquerors with no other purpose than capturing booty and enhancing the glory of kings; now they marched as liberators and instruments of God's glory. Elizabeth of England and Catherine of France were of the old school; they preferred to keep diplomacy the concern of men, not of angels, and they regarded with the deepest misgivings Philip of Spain's argument that when dealing with heresy "it was better to go and put out the fire in a neighbor's house than to wait for it to spread to one's own." Both queens agreed that at all costs the affairs of their respective kingdoms must be solved without benefit of Spanish troops, and in both countries there were men who urged that the best defense against Spanish good intentions was to encourage the rebellion that had recently broken out in

several provinces of the Netherlands, where the Spaniards were confronted with a major social and religious revolution.

In June 1572, Coligny was again called to court, this time to help arrange the marriage of Henry of Navarre to Catherine's daughter Margaret. Though the marriage negotiations moved smoothly, the queen again miscalculated, for Coligny began to exercise an inordinate influence over the neurotic and impressionable Charles IX. In the eyes of the queen mother, he was committing the one crime that could be neither forgiven nor ignored: He was stealing the affections of a son who until that moment had listened to no one but his mother. "After God," Charles had said, "the queen, my mother, is the one to whom I have the greatest number of obligations." As usual, Catherine's solution was expedient but tragically myopic. Coligny, she decided, would have to go, and the obvious instrument of assassination was the Guise family's blood feud with the admiral.

The staging of murder was complicated by the approaching wedding of Protestant Navarre and Catholic Margaret, which had been set for August 18, 1572, and by the decision of the Huguenot nobility to attend in force. On both sides, tension mounted: Paris was stoutly Catholic and viewed the growing number of visiting Protestant nobles and their henchmen with fear and hatred; Navarre and his young cousin, Duke Henry, entered the city with 800 cavalry; and the roads to Paris were crowded with some 5,000 Huguenots determined to view the wedding. The queen mother was worried lest Coligny and Condé were plotting to kidnap the king, and the Protestants were filled with anger at Catherine's refusal to intervene in the Netherlands. Under conditions guaranteed to explode at the slightest spark, Catherine went ahead with her plans to dispatch the admiral. The results were catastrophic. On August 22, as Coligny was *walking down a narrow alley, his assassin shot at* him from a small window. What saved the admiral's life was the accident of his bending down to adjust his shoe. The bullet ripped open his arm and smashed his hand. At this outrage to their leader, every Huguenot in the city was up in arms. Protestants crowded into Coligny's residence, shouting: "That arm shall cost thirty thousand other arms!" And the admiral indignantly demanded an immediate audience with the king.

Charles IX was the one weak link in the queen's design. He

was unaware of his mother's plans and told Coligny that he was "determined to have justice done on such a scale that it shall be a warning to every man in my kingdom." If the king carried out his threat, his own mother would be implicated, and at this moment, Catherine lost her head. In her panic, she chose to take literally the Huguenot threat to demand 30,000 arms in vengeance for what Guise had done to Coligny, and she decided to have all the Huguenot leaders, so conveniently assembled in Paris, massacred. It remained only to win over her son. After pleading with him for hours, she triumphed, and a beaten and furious Charles turned and cried: "Well then . . . let it be so. But kill them all, that no one will be left to reproach me afterwards."

The signal for bloodshed was given early on the morning of August 24, the feast of Saint Bartholomew. It had been decided to spare the Huguenot princes of the blood, Navarre and Condé, but no other nobleman was to escape. If Catherine intended to murder the Calvinist leaders only, her plans tragically miscarried, for the moment the bells tolled, the citizens of Paris rose up and shouted, "The Huguenots! The Huguenots! Death to the Huguenots!" Some of the victims were stabbed, some were hanged, some were drowned, some were thrown from windows and rooftops, and Henry, the Duke of Guise, personally supervised the death of Admiral Coligny. Paris, said one shocked observer, "was like a conquered city," and the Seine ran red with blood. Killing and butchery spilled over into the provinces, bringing the grisly total of deaths to an estimated 10,000; including 1,000 at Orleans, 800 at Lyons, and possibly 4,000 in Paris.

Despite the torrent of blood, St. Bartholomew's Day achieved little except to divide further a kingdom that was already falling apart. The Catholic world applauded. Philip of Spain announced that the deed "has given me one of the greatest joys of my life," and wrote young King Charles that the extermination of the hateful heretic would be his "greatest title to glory." The pope had a medal issued to commemorate the victory of God over Satan, and His Holiness ordered Rome to be illuminated for three nights in token of the triumph. If ardent Catholics viewed the massacre as a particularly holy act, Protestant Europe regarded it as one of unmitigated infamy. Elizabeth of England, dressed in the deepest mourning and accompanied by her full Council, listened in icy silence to the French ambassador's efforts to justify the

slaughter. In Calvin's Switzerland, in the Netherlands, and in Lutheran Germany, Protestants were aghast. Gruesome and generally inaccurate details were published: Charles IX was accused of having used Huguenots for target practice, shooting them down from his window in the Louvre, and William of Orange wrote that the French king would never be able to wash the red stain from his bloody hands. Even Ivan the Terrible of Russia, who was no stranger to savagery, wrote a letter of protest.

After Catholic applause and Protestant shudders had died away and the bloody gutters of Paris had been washed clean, the queen mother was able to take stock. The inventory was far from satisfactory. From the blood of the aristocratic martyrs sprang an invigorated and republican Huguenot Church that openly advocated regicide and war. In destroying the aristocratic leadership of Calvinism, Catherine had created a worse danger to the state, for the Huguenot party became democratic and theocratic and came to consider monarchy as well as Catholicism incompatible with godliness. In the south, where some Huguenot nobles survived and remained strong, feudal provincialism, sustained and encouraged by religious hatred, achieved its ultimate purpose: independence. After the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, France was broken in two. The province of Languedoc went republican, setting up a council of state, an assembly of deputies, and provincial councils, establishing its own laws and fiscal machinery, and levying its own taxes upon Catholics and Protestants alike.

The governor and virtual King of Languedoc was a Catholic, Henry, count of Damville, second son of the old constable, and his support of the Huguenots represented still another result of the events of St. Bartholomew's Day, for Damville was a member of the politique party and a cousin of the murdered Coligny. The slaughter represented everything he and his party had striven to avoid. Moderate Catholics were outraged, and the politiques wondered when their own turn might come. St. Bartholomew's Day and the queen's policy had driven the politiques and the Huguenots into union, and Damville announced publicly his willingness to follow the direction of the new Huguenot leaders.

Final retribution, regarded by the Protestant world as divine in origin, came when Charles IX was stricken by a combination of remorse and congenital tuberculosis. After St.

Bartholomew's Day, he began to change, visibly to die. He hung his head constantly and dared look no man in the eye. At twenty-four, he looked sixty-four. His hands began to tremble; he was plagued with hideous nightmares; in the end, he was little more than a living skeleton. He died on May 30, 1574, the worn-out scion of an exhausted house. His final word was a suitable and tragic summation of his life: a moment before he died he mumbled, "Mother." Catherine, in her efforts to save herself and her son's throne, had helped to destroy the one child who had been totally dependent on her, and into his place stepped Henry III, the child she feared and loved the most, and the Valois king who destroyed himself and everything the queen had worked to protect in his determination to escape his mother's stifling affection.

The years between 1572 and 1576 were filled with fighting and political anarchy. Navarre reported to a friend that "we carry daggers and wear coats of mail and very often breastplates under our cloaks. I am only waiting for the opportunity to have a little fighting, for I am told that they are plotting to kill me and I want to steal a march on them." Everyone was waiting for the opportunity to kill, and when the occasion did come, they took full advantage of it. The kingdom was in arms, justice dead, France divided, the exchequer empty, and the court so impoverished that the king often had scarcely enough money to purchase his dinner. Anything was preferable to continued war, but peace could only be purchased by total capitulation to the Huguenots and politiques. In the end, Henry III and Catherine had no choice but to accept their terms, and the Peace of Monsieur was signed in May 1576. The government officially apologized for St. Bartholomew's Day; Protestants were once again granted complete liberty of worship throughout the kingdom, and four additional surety cities were placed under their control.

With a perversity born of bad luck and worse judgment, the queen continued to take one step after another that only created more pressing problems. From 1576 on, the Valois throne was crushed between two political-religious forces for whose existence Catherine herself was in large measure responsible. From the start, her aim had been to hold the balance between two equal parties and thus preserve the security of France and the throne of her sons. After 1576, the crown was too weak to control its own creations. Catherine's consummate duplicity might possibly have postponed the fate

of the Valois dynasty, but after the humiliation of the Peace of Monsieur, the gouty and aging pilot was dropped. Henry cast off his mother's tutelage and set off to rule his kingdom alone.

Everything about the king, wrote the papal legate, is contradictory. Henry was a skeptic, yet he scourged and mortified his flesh. He could be every inch a monarch if he chose, but more often he elected to play the degenerate. He was avid for excitement, yet constitutionally incapable of enduring it. He surrounded every thought with a coating of verbiage so thick that none knew whether he spoke profound wisdom or merely gabbled without meaning. He sensed with uncanny accuracy the truth about men and politics, but he was incapable of acting upon his own instincts, for, as he confessed, "nobody else would agree with me and I may possibly be wrong." Henry suffered from constant headaches, an infected ear, and a maddening itch brought on by chronic eczema. Occasionally there were spells of frantic activity during which he drenched his body in perfume, festooned himself with ribbons and earrings, and painted his face with a mask of rouge and powder, from which his sick and sunken eyes peered. He surrounded his royal person with effeminate young men who wore their hair in elaborate curls and spent their time in gaming, drinking, and dancing. On one occasion, he arranged a banquet served by the beauties of the court dressed as men in garments of green silk; another time he assumed feminine attire and attended a ball with his bodice cut low and his neck adorned with "a pearl necklace and three linen collars." Long after he was mercifully dead, the Duke of Sully remembered those days. "I shall never forget," he said, "the fantastic and extravagant equipage and attitude in which I found this prince in his cabinet: he had a sword at his side, a Spanish hood hung down upon his shoulders, a little cap, such as collegians wear, upon his head, and a basket full of little dogs hung to a broad ribbon about his neck." Such was the last Valois King of France.

While the state faltered under the rule of a prince of Sodom and his "court of silk and blood," Catholics, under the leadership of Henry of Guise, took matters into their own hands. The Peace of Monsieur was regarded as a disgrace to France and an insult to God, and Catholics joined together in a Holy League dedicated to the extermination of heresy. The League openly sought military aid from Spain and deliberately

appealed to every variety of provincial and feudal greed. Once again, France fell prey to open warfare, and neither the kingdom nor the king had anything to gain, no matter which side won. Fortunately, the war lasted less than a year. By 1577, the Holy League had forced the Huguenots to accept a more limited form of freedom to worship.

Though the Catholics again triumphed in war, whatever hopes they may have had for the future vanished when the king's youngest brother, Francis, died and Protestant Henry of Navarre became heir *to* the throne. The youngest of Catherine's children had originally been the Duke of Alençon, but on Henry III's succession to the throne, he became the Duke of Anjou. He was one of those turbulent and improbable characters who keep appearing in history. After his older brother had failed at the task, he tried to win Elizabeth's hand in 1572 in a whirlwind courtship; he was consumed with pathological hatred for his brothers; he openly conspired to snatch the succession from Henry when Charles IX died in 1574; and he tried his hand at treason by joining the politique-Huguenot alliance in open war against his mother and brother. Anjou was a chronic pest, the master of five duchies, the possessor of 400,000 crowns yearly, and a man obsessed with a passion to become a king. In 1577, Henry III found an opportunity to send his difficult and unstable brother to make trouble for someone else. Unofficially, he and Catherine urged Francis to find himself a crown in the Netherlands, where both the Catholic and Calvinist subjects of Philip of Spain were in full-scale revolt. Unfortunately, Anjou was no more successful at war than he had been at winning Elizabeth's hand (several years after his first attempt he had tried again), and he was disastrously defeated in battle by the Netherlanders, the people he had come to protect. Three years later, in 1584, at the age of thirty, he died of the Valois sickness, hemorrhage of the lungs.

His death upset the political applecart. Throughout France, primitive passions welled to the surface again, and Catholics, motivated by greed, fear, and idealism, were seized by the determination to preserve France from the horror of a heretic king. The dynastic aspirations of Henry, the Duke of Guise, the religious policy of the papacy, the absolute conviction of the Jesuits, the international interests of Spain, and the irrational fear of tens of thousands of Frenchmen who disciplined their children and terrified themselves with stories

of sinister Huguenots rising up in the dead of night to murder good Catholics in their beds - all these were in accord: Henry of Navarre must never be King of France.

Anjou was dead scarcely three months when Catholic demagogues whipped the Holy League into action again. To priest, monk, and prior, the League was an instrument of God's ultimate victory, and humble men joined its ranks as if they were going on a crusade. At least two men viewed it from a more worldly perspective, however. There is little doubt that the Duke of Guise was dazzled by the prospect of succeeding to the throne once Henry III was dead, and he used the League in an effort to win a crown. Don Bernardino de Mendoza, the resident Spanish ambassador at Paris and undoubtedly the best informed man in France, was equally sanguine. Mendoza was welcomed in the innermost circles of the Holy League. He was the valued friend and paymaster of both the duke and the fanatically revolutionary Committee of Sixteen, the secret left wing of the League. As the man who controlled the League's purse strings, Mendoza also called the tune, which became increasingly Spanish in tempo. Spanish interests demanded that Henry of Navarre be barred from the throne and that France be broken by civil war. The might of Spain had been ordained as the means by which all Europe would be won back to the Catholic fold, and if heresy were to be exterminated in the Netherlands and England, Valois France must be kept pure in faith and helpless in diplomacy.

In July 1585, the League demanded of a bankrupt and helpless Henry III that he revoke all edicts of toleration toward heretics and ban Protestants from the land. By September, the pope had proclaimed Henry of Navarre a relapsed heretic, incapable of lawfully succeeding to the throne, and in October, much to Mendoza's satisfaction, the bitterest and most extraordinary of all the French religious wars broke out. The War of the Three Henrys was fought by Navarre for survival, by Guise for a kingdom, and by Valois because he had no other choice. By the winter of 1585-86, the League had three armies in the field, all heavily financed by Spain: one to destroy Henry of Navarre, one to handle an army of 35,000 Germans marching to the aid of their Protestant brethren in France, and one to guard the king. As the conflict progressed, it became increasingly apparent that Henry III was not the master of his army, but its prisoner, and that Henry, the Duke of Guise, was king of Catholic

France in all but name. With well-deserved pride, Mendoza reported to Philip in Madrid that "events here could hardly have gone more happily for Your Majesty's affairs."

By 1588, the war among the three Henrys had been reduced to a struggle between Henry of Guise, who sought to maintain his control of the kingdom and who coveted the crown of France, and Henry of Valois, who possessed neither a son nor a realm, but who was determined to keep his crown and bequeath what little he possessed to his legal, if heretical, heir, Henry of Navarre. The climax came in May on the Day of the Barricades. At the invitation of the revolutionary Committee of Sixteen, who controlled the city's government, and in open defiance of the king's command, Duke Henry entered Paris. Henry III, in self-defense, mobilized the Swiss guards. Rumors spread that he was planning a Catholic St. Bartholomew's and the murder of the duke. The citizens of Paris instantly flew to arms, barricaded the streets, and pelted the king's troops with filth and debris. The monarch fled in panic, leaving Henry "king of Paris" and virtual dictator of northern France. A month later, Henry III gave his official recognition to political reality. He dismissed his ministers, surrendered the substance of power to the League, promised to change the succession, and in return was permitted the hollow satisfaction of calling himself King of France. Henry's capitulation was not complete, however. The Swiss guards remained, and the ministers he had dismissed had been more loyal to the queen, his mother, than to him. It was symptomatic of the violence of the age that yet another murder was deemed necessary and acceptable to solve a political problem. Almost immediately the king began to arrange the carefully staged elimination of his rival.

The end came like the conclusion to a Shakespearean tragedy. On December 23, 1588, Henry, the Duke of Guise, was murdered in the anteroom to the sovereign's bedchamber while Henry, the King of France, hid behind the curtains. The next day, the cardinal of Guise was struck down by assassins. The double murder produced the ultimate irony of almost thirty years of religious horror. Catholic fanaticism erupted, Paris revolted, the Holy League demanded vengeance and threatened regicide, and a badly frightened Henry III was forced into open alliance with his cousin of Navarre and the hated heretics in order to save his toppling throne. In the end, the inevitable happened: on August 1,

1589, the chain of murders was completed when a young Dominican monk Jacques Clément, convinced that God had instructed him to deliver the Mother Church from such a monstrous monarch, set out to kill the king. He asked for an audience, and as Henry stood before him, he drove a knife into the king's stomach. The monk was dead almost before Henry knew what had struck him, but murder had been done, and within hours, the last of the Valois line died. Protestant Henry of Navarre was now monarch of a realm that was swept by hatred and social revolution and overrun by foreign armies.

Catherine de Médicis must be given her share of responsibility for the death of her son, even though she was already seven months dead at the time of the assassination. She had taught her children the art of survival in an age of religious madness, but ultimately her own art destroyed everything that she held most dear - her offspring, her house, her adopted realm. As the Florentine ambassador said, she was always "prudent and very experienced in matters of this world," yet she never knew "what remedy to apply to so many present ills nor to the ills to come." Surely she had more than her share of ills, but just as surely she had the morals and the instincts of a Machiavellian diplomat, which hardly accorded with her love for her children or fitted into a world where kings and commoners were willing to sacrifice men and kingdoms to religious conscience. There is a legend that when the Guise brothers were murdered at the command of her son, Cardinal Bourbon reproached her, saying, "Ah! Madam, this is your doing. It is you who are killing us all!" She did not deny the charge; instead she whimpered, "I can bear no more. I must go to bed." Less than a month later, in January 1589, she was dead, aged seventy, and 800,000 écus in debt. Even in death, she failed to attain the grandeur that had so persistently eluded her in life. Her body was inadequately embalmed and had to be buried in haste in the shallow grave of a provincial church, and thereafter, as one contemporary observed, no one paid any "more notice to her than to a dead goat."

VI

GOD'S OBVIOUS DESIGN

"If death," wrote the Spanish viceroy in Naples, "came from Spain, we should all live to a very great age." Like the mills of the gods, Philip of Spain ground slowly, and when death finally came to the King of Spain, it was quietly told to wait while His Most Catholic Majesty discussed with his ministers and priest every particular of his impending funeral, ordered great bolts of black cloth to shroud his palace, and demanded that his coffin be brought to the bedside to make sure it was the proper size for his putrid and withered body. Just as Philip the Prudent could not die without ensuring that his corpse would fit perfectly its final resting place, so for forty years he could not live without scrutinizing with agonizing care every detail of the government of his vast domain. When his father, the Emperor Charles, gouty and sick of heart, resigned the immense burden of his many realms to Philip, not a king but a prince of pendants mounted the throne of Spain and shouldered the weight of the largest empire the world had ever seen.

The magnitude of Philip's failure, the martyrdom of an entire kingdom to his unselfish but vainglorious vision of a Europe purged of heresy and united in the ample bosom of the Mother Church, has led scholars to speculate on the character of a monarch who hid himself in a cell twelve feet square as his empire grew ever larger, who dressed himself in the severest black as the gold of the Indies poured into his coffers, and who sought the quiet of his study as Spanish arms won victories for God and Church on land and sea. There is something terrifying about the words used to describe the king: solitary, reserved, dispassionate, cold, imperturbable are the adjectives most often employed by apologists and critics alike. The anecdotes about his iron self-restraint are numerous. One is told about a young and nervous clerk who ruined an evening's work when he inadvertently poured ink, not sand, on one of the king's letters. With superhuman patience Philip carefully explained: "That is the ink. This is the sand." During his lifetime, Philip buried seventeen of his family, but he never showed sorrow, and he ordered his priests to render thanks to God on the occasion of each funeral. The most celebrated story told is probably untrue, but it is in keeping with the king's character. When a frightened secretary brought news of the disaster of the Armada, Philip barely interrupted the motion of his pen to remark: "I give thanks to God by whose hand I have been so

endowed that I can put to sea another fleet as great as this we have lost whenever I choose."

Even in his fanaticism, Philip was without enthusiasm, which made his words to one of the Inquisition's victims, Don Carlos de Seso, more monstrous than if they had been spoken in anger. The occasion was the magnificent auto-da-fé of October 1559, staged by the inquisitor-general to celebrate the king's happy return to Spain and to demonstrate to the world Philip's determination never to "live to be a king of heretics." The celebration was held in the great square of Valladolid, opposite the Cathedral of St. Francis, where before an audience of 200,000, Philip took a mighty oath to defend the holy Catholic faith with all the strength of his empire. Then to the tolling of the bells, twenty-five condemned heretics received judgment. Thirteen escaped with imprisonment and penance; the rest were sentenced to burn alive, but ten of them, who chose to die as Catholics, were mercifully strangled before being consumed in the fire; the two who refused to recant endured the agony of the stake. One of these was Carlos de Seso, who accused the king of inhumanity and barbarism. Philip's flat and epicene voice answered: "If my son were as evil as you are, I myself would fetch the wood wherewith to burn him."

Throughout his life, Philip acted only after most painstaking deliberation, but once a decision was made, he moved with the inexorable conviction of a man at peace with God. Philip's conscience was no servant to ambition, and he always maintained that his royal office placed upon him a burden far greater than that of other men, for God expected more of kings than of subjects and more of the King of Spain than of any other king. The entire structure of his government was designed to give Philip the time and the information to make decisions for himself. His father, the emperor, had warned him to "depend on none but yourself," and that advice became the rock upon which Philip built the administrative system of his empire.

Spain and its dependencies were governed by an administrative pyramid with a royal council of state near its peak and twelve regional and departmental councils at its base. The lesser units, such as the councils of Castile and of the Indies, or the Inquisition, exercised immense authority, but the council of state was little more than a debating forum

that the king kept divided into opposing factions and used only as a source of information and as a place in which to test his ministers. Philip the Prudent never sought the unanimous advice of his council, for that would have smacked of conciliar control. Instead, he confronted every minister with his opposite number. If half the council followed the lead of one member, the Duke of Alva, and espoused a policy of strong action, Philip was at pains to see that the other half was of the opinion of an opposing councilor, the Prince of Eboli, who stood for mildness, diplomacy, and caution. Philip listened to both men with endless patience, but his ultimate purpose was to ensure that every policy urged by the one would be criticized by the other. Information, not advice, was the king's obsession, and he read an ambassador's passing comment about English insects as avidly as he did Mendoza's political analysis.

"It is well to consider everything," Philip once said, and he sedulously followed his own dictum. Government by annotation was the result. No detail was trifling enough to be delegated, no report long enough to warrant abridgment. Mountains of papers arrived daily from Aragon and Naples, Milan and the Netherlands, Mexico and Peru, Africa and the Indies. The Duke of Alva in Antwerp, Bernadino de Mendoza in London or Paris, Cristobal de Moura in Lisbon, and Francisco de Toledo in Lima dutifully reported to their master, and he as faithfully read, corrected, and annotated everything they wrote. With stupefying industry, Philip filled the margins of their reports with his spidery handwriting, laboriously noting that a Latin scribe had spelled quasi with a double s, commenting upon a detail of government, or curtly dismissing some opinion with which he disagreed.

The result was endless, infuriating delay; but that hardly mattered to Philip, for patience was a virtue that he shared with Elizabeth of England. Philip's statement that "time and I are a match for any two" was more than a passing expression of his belief that delay resolved all things, it was the essence of his life. Every petition, every memorandum from the council, every ambassador's report followed a carefully prescribed path and was eventually added to the great heap of documents that weighted down the king's desk and consumed his waking hours. Everything that the king handled had to be in precise and proper form, and Philip was loath to read any letter that did not, as custom demanded, address

him simply as "Sir" and conclude with the words "God guard the Catholic person of Your Majesty." Without time to deliberate, without the security of system, without every scrap of information by which to arrive at certainty, Philip was as helpless as a pedant without facts or a bureaucrat without organization. Only when detail had been finalized did the king finally make up his mind.

Philip's somber palace outside Madrid stands as a monument to the man and the golden age of Spain. The Escorial is a savage and sinister pile of gray stone in a setting that only El Greco could have captured in paint. Part monastery, part mausoleum, and part mansion for a ruler possessed of a clerical turn of mind and consumed by a messianic ideal, the Escorial is a mirror of the king who built it and the empire that sustained it. Long before Philip came to the throne, he had pictured to himself just such a massive hiding place, safe in that "land of rocks and saints." His father, when in Spain, had lived in the exquisitely cool and arabesque rooms of the caliphs of Granada and later had built himself a superbly impractical palace in the best Renaissance style. But the son sought not a home but a tomb, not the grandeur of Rome nor the miracle of Muslim artistry but a Christian citadel and hermitage.

In one task alone, Philip would tolerate no delay; he could not wait to see his dream translated into the granite of the Sierra de Guadarrama. Massive, fortress-like walls formed an enormous structure that was 675 feet long and 530 feet wide and almost 100 feet high, split by narrow and unfriendly windows; their appearance belied the luxury within the Escorial. Every region of Philip's empire contributed to the fulfillment of the royal vision: from Milan came silver chalices and gold candelabra, tapestries were provided by Antwerp and Brussels, an infinite variety of woods were imported from the New World. From Spain itself came marble of the Sierra Nevada and steel of Toledo; and Venice - outside Philip's domain - sent paintings by Titian and Tintoretto to decorate the walls.

Even working in haste it took twenty-one years to construct and furnish a palace that would conform exactly to the king's demanding tastes. Philip gathered the riches of his empire not only for his personal satisfaction but also to honor God and Saint Lawrence, whose grisly martyrdom had inspired the

architectural plan and after whom the great church of the Escorial was named. Saint Lawrence had died on a gridiron, and Philip's palace was laid out accordingly. At the center of the grid was placed the monastery church, hidden, except for its great dome, by the towering walls of monastic cells and royal apartments. In vaults beneath the church rested the family coffins filled with Hapsburg bodies; alongside the church was located Philip's bedchamber, equipped with a shuttered peephole through which the king could look out on the Hieronymite monks in prayer before the high altar of Saint Lawrence. In lonely eminence, God's lieutenant on earth wrapped himself in the mantle of divinity and meditated upon the heavy responsibilities of kings.

Philip allowed himself a single luxury: As monarch of twenty-seven kingdoms and an empire upon which the sun never set, he could indulge his collector's instinct, and even before the Escorial was finished, the king had turned it into a vast library and reliquary. Books, manuscripts, relics, oddities, and rarities poured in from agents all over the world. Philip had been educated in the Renaissance tradition of learning; his library with its 30,000 volumes and 4,000 manuscripts was no less precious to him than the shelves upon which were placed in rich settings the arm of Saint Lawrence, two bones of the apostles Philip and James, and the remains of Saint Justus and Saint Pastor. Every facet of Philip's character found expression in the Escorial - his coldness, his pedantry, his magpie instinct, his austerity, his passion for privacy, and above all, his sense of divine mission. For all his golden locks, Hapsburg chin, and Germanic complexion, Philip was the perfect Spaniard. He was at home in the land of Ignatius Loyola and Saint Theresa and her barefooted Carmelites, where every man's soul was his castle and the Lord walked "among the pots and pans."

Spain had been the product of a Christian vision come true; it had been won by blood and faith. Spanish soldiers had hurled back the onslaught of Islam and had carved out a kingdom for God. A handful of Spanish conquistadors, stout of heart and strong in faith, had performed miracles and had toppled the empires of the New World. Philip belonged to such a Spain, for his image of himself as the instrument of God's glorious design was no more fantastic than Loyola's will to sainthood, Saint Theresa's determination to reform the Church, Cortes's dream of empire, or Don Quixote's romantic

chivalry. In Spain, fantasies like the Escorial or Don Quixote's windmills had a way of coming true. When Philip, in August 1559, determined to return to his kingdom of miracles after the death of his wife Mary Tudor and accept his destiny as the chosen leader of the forces of the Counter-Reformation, he believed that he would be able to make another fantasy come true and restore the Church to power throughout Europe.

On October 25, 1555, the Emperor Charles, with tears in his eyes, had announced his decision to abdicate and spend his remaining days in the Spanish monastery of Yuste. Early the following year, he resigned his Spanish dominions to Philip and later assigned his imperial crown to his brother, Ferdinand. At fifty-six, the "greatest emperor that the Christian world had ever seen," as his wife persisted in calling him, was white-haired and exhausted, his hands so arthritic that he could scarcely open a letter and the pain so terrible that he prayed for death. A rich diet of pickled partridges, eel pies, sardines, Rhenish wine, and iced beer may have shortened his life, but it was his constant effort to discipline an empire as quarrelsome as a pack of wolves that had made Charles old beyond his years. Thirty-six years of ceaseless peregrinations had taught him three things about his empire: Heresy had to be tolerated in Germany, fortune was a woman who loved not an old man, and his ramshackle dominions would be more orthodox in their faith and more manageable in their proportions if divested of the German states and freed from imperial responsibility.

Even without the imperial dignity, Philip's titles were impressive beyond measure. He was ruler of the three kingdoms of Spain (Castile, Aragon, and Navarre), Lord of Burgundy and the Netherlands, archduke of Milan, sovereign of Naples and Sicily, monarch of the Indies, and until Mary's death, King of England as well. England had been regarded by his father as absolutely essential to the dynastic interests of the Hapsburgs in their struggle against Valois France. The island kingdom completed the encirclement of France, secured the Channel route between Spain and the Netherlands, and ensured a constant flow of unfinished wool cloth to the markets of Flanders. So important was the English alliance that in 1554, the Emperor Charles had bestowed his only legitimate son upon the aging and ailing Mary Tudor. Philip had dutifully accepted the possessive caresses of his neurotic wife and had suffered exile in a land

of heretics and barbarians, who unmercifully insulted and cheated his entourage. As long as the Valois threat continued, and there remained any real hope of an heir by Mary, Philip stayed close to England, but by 1557, it was painfully evident that his queen's pregnancies were the fictions of a disordered mind, and it was apparent that France, after its defeat at St. Quentin, could easily be persuaded to sue for peace. By the time Mary died in November 1558, Philip was prepared to view the event as a blessed liberation that relieved him of the responsibility of rescuing Calais for the English, and freed him to sign the peace of Cateau-Cambrésis and marry Elizabeth Valois of France.

The French marriage brought unexpected blessings, for it was during the celebration of the wedding by proxy that Henry II of France, the bride's father received the fatal injury to his head. By default, Philip became the colossus of Europe: France was ruled by a sickly boy king and his greedy uncles; the Emperor Ferdinand was rendered almost impotent by the Lutheran princes of Germany; and England was exposed to the doubtful charms and tender government of a virgin queen. August 1559, seemed a good time for the king to return to Spain to begin transforming the land of his birth into a "fortress, strength, treasure, and sword" of God. Even the famous astrologer Nostradamus considered the moment to be propitious.

Colossus though he was, Philip faced a formidable task. The soldiers of Satan, by their many triumphs among the Protestant princes of the empire, had left his father a broken man and Germany a dying and divided realm. Scotland and England had both fallen into the devil's grasp, and in France, the heretics waited impatiently to bathe the kingdom in blood. Everywhere heresy marched triumphant and unchecked, and Philip heard with alarm of the discovery of Protestant cells in Spain itself, in Seville and Valladolid. By chance the Inquisition had been alerted to the growing peril: Calvinist propaganda intended for a heretical priest had been delivered accidentally to another cleric of the same name. That worthy ecclesiastic read with shock about the inefficacy of good works and viewed with horror a picture of the pope giving thanks to the devil. He immediately took the book to the Inquisition. A swift and thorough heresy hunt ensued, and several autos-da-fé were administered as an antidote to Protestantism before the poison could infect disgruntled

nobles and susceptible merchants.

Spaniards were shocked that even a few hundred disciples of evil had crept into a land "so Catholic, so firm, and so true." In no other country in Europe was unity of faith and state so intimately and emotionally linked and the Inquisition held in such reverence. The *Suprema*, which governed the Inquisition, was thought of as God's special agency for preserving purity of creed and served as the king's effective instrument for maintaining his authority over Church, aristocracy, and citizenry. Each auto-da-fé increased the prestige and power of the Inquisition, and no one was too insignificant or too lofty to escape its scrutiny. Even an archbishop, Bartolomé de Carranza, of Toledo, was quietly whisked away in the dead of night by order of the Suprema and vanished from sight. The charge of heresy against him was grounded on sentences torn out of context, and his secret trial dragged on for seventeen years. It is difficult to judge men who strove to detect deviations of faith with the aid of red-hot pincers and stretched men upon the rack in order to force Satan to reveal his presence in them. Yet modern times are no stranger to heresy hunts. Then, as now, it was argued that all men must be formed from a single ideological mold, for only thus would it be possible to be sure of friends and recognize enemies. Ideas, unless carefully expurgated, were considered dangerous, and deviation in thought, it was said, bred confusion and doubt, the inevitable harbingers of treason and ultimate defeat.

Had Protestantism been the sole consideration of the Spanish Inquisition, the office would have withered away for lack of work. What inspired the Suprema to unrelenting vigil and convinced good Spaniards that it was "guided by God for His praise and honor" was the constant fear in every Catholic heart of Moriscos and Marranos - Christian Moors and Christian Jews. As French Catholics saw Huguenots in their nightmares and English Puritans read with horrified fascination of the atrocities committed by Jesuits and inquisitors, so Spaniards were brought up on grisly tales of Catholic children kidnapped and educated in the Jewish faith, of girls sold into Moorish slavery, and of secret and satanic rites practiced high in the mountains surrounding Granada.

Fiction born of hysteria and reports based on reality can be difficult to disentangle. After the fall of Granada, in 1492, the

Moors had been forced to choose between Christianity and exile. Most chose to convert, but their conquerors still eyed them with deep suspicion, noting that they remained Moorish in dress, language, and custom. The people of Granada worked on feast days, observed Fridays more carefully than Sundays, practiced circumcision, and married according to the Islamic rites. The day of reckoning had been postponed by Morisco money, which persuaded the government not to enforce laws that had been decreed against Moorish dress and culture, but in 1567 Philip determined upon the total Christianization of such doubtful subjects. His decision, the result of great deliberation, was typical; he concluded that both conscience and national policy demanded strong action. Arabic was outlawed, Moorish books, both innocent and pernicious, were destroyed, Islamic customs and dress were forbidden, and during all Fridays, Church holy days, and marriage celebrations, every Moorish family was ordered to keep its doors open so that all the world could inspect the sincerity of its Catholicism. Faced with cultural annihilation, the Moriscos rebelled. Christian men, especially priests, were butchered, and women and children were sold as slaves to the Barbary pirates in exchange for arms. Moorish atrocities were countered with Spanish reprisals, and the entire province of Granada was put to the sword.

War in the high sierras was much more than a civil insurrection by an oppressed minority; it was another battle in the great crusade that wrested Spain from the infidel. Granada was regarded as the weak spot through which Islam might re-enter and again conquer the peninsula. The threat was no figment of wild Spanish imagination. The Ottoman Empire was at its apogee, and with its support the Moors might be enabled to reassert their independence in Granada. In 1560, a Spanish fleet had been nearly destroyed at Los Gelves and the western Mediterranean opened up to Turkish expansion; Suleiman the Magnificent had died in 1566 while his armies were hammering at the gates of Vienna; the new sultan, Selim II, was urged to send an army to liberate the Moriscos and reconquer Spain. Fortunately for Philip, Turkish attention was diverted toward a struggle with Venice over Cyprus; even so, the Moriscos received 800 trained soldiers from Algiers and a steady flow of arms and volunteers from their Moorish brethren in North Africa.

Treason and heresy in Granada and Muslim power in North

Africa and the Mediterranean were equally dangerous, and Philip set about the task of exterminating one and repelling the other. During 1570, Granada was overrun by Spanish troops, and the Morisco menace was destroyed once and for all. The entire Moorish population was transported to other parts of Spain, and the province repopulated with Spaniards of untarnished blood and unimpeachable orthodoxy. Thenceforth, any adult male of Moorish descent found within ten leagues of the province of Granada was executed, and any female was sold into slavery. The price of victory had been heavy - 60,000 Spaniards killed, and an entire province turned into a desert - but purity of faith and the security of the kingdom were worth the cost. Spain had to be made safe for Christianity at home before it could begin the battle against the menace of Islam abroad.

A union of Venice, the papacy, and Spain to form a holy league was the necessary preliminary to victory over the infidel in the Mediterranean, but such a union took months of hardheaded negotiation to achieve. The Venetians hated the Spaniards and deeply mistrusted the papacy, and the pope's fear of Spanish hegemony was almost as great as his need for Spanish troops in the battle against heresy. It galled the Holy Father unspeakably when he discovered that his Spanish champion treated him more like a palace priest than like the supreme judge of Christendom. Fourteen years earlier, Philip had been at open war with the ferocious and bitterly anti-Spanish Paul IV, and his troops had marched against banners consecrated by the Vatican. The King of Spain had regarded the Council of Trent as a conclave "in which the devil was working and plotting," and not until Spanish influence had triumphed over both French and papal interests did he look favorably upon its decrees. Even Henry VIII might have envied Philip his ecclesiastical arrogance, for that Most Catholic Monarch taxed, disciplined, and governed his Church without papal interference, and at the same time interfered so much in the affairs of Rome that Pius IV, the gentlest of pontiffs, once shouted in rage: "If the king wants to be king in Spain, I want to be pope at Rome." In the end, however, necessity prevailed over dissension. A Spanish, Venetian, and papal fleet of six great galleasses - each of them bearing forty-four cannons - 203 galleys, and 100 transport ships, carrying a total of 28,000 soldiers, sailed to the rescue of Cyprus in September 1571, a month after that Greek island

had been overrun by the Turkish troops of Sultan Selim II.

Once Philip had determined upon war, he was willing to chance all in God's service, and the fleet was ordered to seek out the navy of the Sublime Porte and destroy it no matter what the risk. Christian met infidel in the Gulf of Lepanto, in waters controlled by the Turks, where defeat would have meant annihilation and mastery of the entire Mediterranean by the Ottoman Empire. The battle was as much a clash of religions as of vessels. As the Turkish navy, in every way equal to the allied fleet, advanced, every Muslim sailor shouted his scorn and hatred of the enemies of Allah. When the moment came for Don John, Philip's illegitimate half-brother and commander of the Christian armada, to give the order to engage the Turks, a crucifix was raised aloft on every mast, and the sailors and soldiers of the allied navy knelt in adoration.

The commanders of the two fleets met in the thick of battle, where the pride of the sultan's janizaries clashed with the pick of the Spanish legions. Twice Don John's soldiers boarded Ali Pasha's flagship and twice they were repulsed by a torrent of arrows and bullets, but on the third attack, the Turkish admiral was struck down by a Spanish musket. In triumph, Don John ordered Ali Pasha's head impaled upon a lance for both navies to behold. Christian cheers and Catholic crosses were raised high, and the banners of Allah were pulled down on vessel after vessel. Of the sultan's 300 ships of war, 117 were captured, and 133 were destroyed. A mere 50 escaped to fight again. Of his forces, 8,000 infidels were sent to their Muslim reward, and 8,000 more were captured; 10,000 Christian galley slaves were liberated.

In the words of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, who had fought at Lepanto, the Spanish victory was "the noblest occasion that past or present ages have seen or future ones may hope to see," and a disillusionment to all nations who believed that the Turks were invincible upon the sea. Pope Pius danced with ecstasy at the news and showered biblical thanks upon Don John, proclaiming "there was a man, one sent from God, whose name was John." The great campanile of Venice sounded the fervent thanks of all Christendom, and the lofty arches of St. Mark's echoed with the *Te Deum*. But in the Escorial there was only quiet acceptance of God's will and the ceremonial presentation of the captured sanjak, the

great standard of the sultan. The banner was bestowed on the monks of the Escorial in solemn recognition of the Spanish contribution to victory and of God's manifest favor toward his champion.

Lepanto marked a turning point for Spain and its messianic monarch. By 1571, the Philip of legend had begun to emerge - black, cheerless, touched with necrophilia, and suffering in stoic silence the pains of asthma, kidney stones, and gout. More and more the king's mind turned away from the infidel, whose continued existence for 800 years seemed to indicate a respectable role in "God's ultimate design," to the more poisonous problem of heresy within the Christian flock. Spain itself had been made safe from Allah without and Satan within, but elsewhere, the devil marched unopposed. If Philip were to be the good shepherd and to realize his dream of a Catholic and orthodox Europe, he would have to exterminate heresy in his own Dutch provinces and win England and Scotland back to the fold of the Roman Church.

Philip had begun to change in the years immediately preceding Lepanto. His court had not always been devoid of pomp and circumstance. He had inherited from his father an enormous entourage of 1,500 persons, and his house had been filled with life and laughter while his French wife and his son lived. In 1568, however, death struck a double blow. In July, Don Carlos, heir to all of his father's possessions, died under circumstances that have provided the theme for partisan novels and high romance ever since, and two months later, Elizabeth Valois, the only one of Philip's wives who had given him happiness, followed her stepson to the grave. The story of Don Carlos is so wrapped in legend that fiction and truth are hopelessly mixed. The picture of the king that emerges reveals Philip at his most insensate - so coldly stoic that any sympathy for him is almost destroyed, although he must have suffered agonizingly before acknowledging the fact that his son was mad.

Don Carlos was misshapen in mind and body. His back was hunched, his body dwarfed, and at eighteen, he weighed only seventy-six pounds. He was a sadist and a paranoiac, roasting rabbits alive and torturing his horses to hear them scream. He found sexual satisfaction in whipping girls, and it was while chasing his steward's daughter or some other young unfortunate that he fell down a flight of stairs and

severely injured his head. His life was saved by a painful and delicate operation, trepanning, which involved cutting a hole through his skull to relieve the pressure on his brain. For good measure, his father insisted on placing the withered corpse of the saintly cook of a Franciscan convent in bed with his son, and he always maintained that not surgery but the odor of sanctity had saved the infante's life.

Despite the Franciscan chef, Don Carlos never fully recovered. From sadism, he moved on to periods of homicidal mania, during which he endeavored to murder anyone who thwarted him. He grew to hate his father and delighted in giving away state secrets. Finally, he attempted flight to Germany. Philip could not risk having his only son fall into the hands of his enemies. Don Carlos, even mad and deformed, was a potential tool in the dynastic schemes of the sovereigns of Europe. The king had no choice but to convert the infante's apartment into a prison. In the early hours of January 19, 1568, Philip entered his son's rooms and personally supervised the nailing up of doors and windows, directing that thenceforth no man should speak or write to his heir. Six months later, Don Carlos was dead. Some said it was suicide; some insisted it was natural death brought on by the prince's habit on hot nights of sleeping naked on a bed of ice; some whispered that it was murder ordered by a father who had detected the taint of heresy in the infante and who could never forgive his son's incestuous lust for the queen, Elizabeth Valois. Whatever the cause, Don Carlos's death, followed so closely by that of the queen, filled Philip's life with anguish. Thenceforth, he lived in mourning, increasing the hours of his labor and turning his thoughts more and more to the problem of exterminating heresy in the Netherlands.

The situation in the Netherlands had always been difficult. Even under Philip's father, fat Burgundian burghers and sly Flemish artisans had been jealous of their municipal liberties and suspicious of the emperor's Spanish son. Heresy had found a fertile breeding place in this country of fleshy Rubens females and scrubbed and tidy Vermeer kitchens. At first, the language of heresy had been limited to the relatively quiet tones of Lutheranism, but by 1566, the streets of Antwerp, Brussels, and Amsterdam were ringing with the strident voice of Calvinism. Charles had directed the most brutal edicts against his heretical subjects and had introduced the Inquisition to the Netherlands; but he had always preferred a

live taxpayer to a dead Protestant, and during his reign the Inquisition had remained inactive, though heretics had not.

Philip faced a serious decision: the choice between an orthodox realm or a prosperous people. For the first eight years of his rule, he accepted his father's policy. The Netherlands was the economic jewel of his empire. It consisted of seventeen provinces, half industrial, half commercial, part French, but all rich and held together in a loose union under the power of the Hapsburg throne and the authority of a States-General, which was little more than an assembly of ambassadors who disliked one another almost as much as they loathed Philip and his Spanish ways. Antwerp was a city of 100,000 and boasted a bourse "for the use of all merchants of whatever land or language." It was the focal point of the European money market, the center of the spice trade with the Indies, and the magnet that attracted the gold and silver of the New World. Louvain, after Paris, was the leading university of northern Europe; Brussels was the source of the most prized tapestries in all Europe. The ports of the northern provinces of Holland and Zeeland harbored some 5,000 sailing vessels, which were beginning to monopolize the oceanic trade routes.

Treason and rebellion were cherished, historic traditions in the Netherlands, as the kings of France, the dukes of Burgundy, and the Hapsburgs of Germany all had learned to their sorrow. Towns were jealous of their ancient rights; proud and impoverished nobles resented any encroachment upon their independence; merchants were reluctant to finance the dynastic wars of Hapsburg princes; clerics feared any rational reorganization of the ecclesiastical muddle of bishoprics and benefices. The Walloons of the south detested the Dutch-speaking north, the apprentices and journeymen of Ghent and Bruges could always be inflamed to violence, and nearly everyone, from Prince William of Orange to the weavers of Arras, feared the presence of the Inquisition and despised the Spanish soldiers who tramped the streets of Brussels and Antwerp.

In the spring and summer of 1566, social, religious, and political discontent, which had been bubbling and seething for five years, erupted into revolution. The lesser nobles bound themselves together to demand the abolition of the Inquisition and force Philip to promise that he would consult

the States-General on all matters of religion. When Philip's regent submitted to the so-called Request and granted religious toleration, the Calvinist minority incited the masses to violence and religious hysteria. In August 1566, 400 churches and monasteries were looted, tombs were broken open, statues of saints smashed, and the gold pillaged from the high altar of Antwerp Cathedral. Monks and nuns were beaten and dispossessed; Catholic homes were sacked; revolution and religious ecstasy engulfed town after town. At first Philip showed surprising restraint in the face of defiance and heresy, but if he were ever to fulfill his vow to maintain the Catholic faith with all his strength and possessions, the king could not permit treason and godlessness to go unpunished. By the summer of 1567, Philip's "duty as a Christian prince" left him no choice but to dispatch the Duke of Alva and 20,000 troops - half of them Spanish - to Brussels, where, should it prove necessary, they were ordered to write God's will in blood.

Alva's soldiers were crusading Catholics who hated the Dutch for their civilian habits, bourgeois greed, and religious laxity. The duke himself believed in immediate and terrible retribution and never doubted that his troops would swiftly settle a revolution led by common apprentices and heretic priests. "I have tamed men of iron," he boasted, "and shall I not be able to tame these men of butter?" Alva did in a year what all the prayers and sermons of the Calvinists had been unable to do: He united all elements and provinces in hatred of Philip. A special court, the bloody Court of Troubles, enforced his law upon nobles and wealthy merchants as well as on peasants and tradesmen. Aristocratic privileges, sacred rights, and ancient laws were swept aside with a flick of the duke's sword, and thousands were tried with military efficiency and executed without mercy. To judicial murder, Alva added economic strangulation: he imposed a crushing tax of 10 percent on the sale of movable goods and 5 percent on the transfer of land. The result was to drive merchants, tradesmen, manufacturers, and aristocrats to further insurrection.

For four years, the rebellion was limited to the northern provinces - the present-day territory of the Netherlands - where privateers, the famous Sea Beggars, carried on an immensely profitable war of piracy against Spanish shipping. At first, they operated out of English ports, but in 1572, the

Beggars seized the coastal city of Brielle and won control of northwestern provinces of Holland and Zeeland. Safe behind a morass of bogs, canals, estuaries, and shallow broads, they were secure on land from Alva's Spanish legions and triumphant on the high seas, where the profits of piracy and commerce were to finance a war that lasted more than thirty years and laid the foundations for Dutch naval and maritime supremacy in the seventeenth century.

The Dutch Sea Beggars found in William the Silent, the Prince of Orange, possibly the only man in the Netherlands who had the vision, determination, and reputation to keep the revolt alive. How he earned the title of "Silent" is difficult to say. Certainly William was neither quiet nor taciturn, but he seems to have possessed a considerable talent for keeping his thoughts to himself. He masked feudal ambitions behind patriotic sentiments and associated his own dynastic designs with the Dutch dislike of Philip's autocratic methods. The hero of the Netherlands may have had feet of clay, but he was a great leader of men and the successful champion of principles to which Dutchmen of every class and prejudice could adhere. Patient, practical, and imperturbable, he discovered the formula that ultimately united the seven quarreling provinces of the north into a nation. He called upon his countrymen "to restore the whole fatherland to its old liberty and prosperity out of the clutches of the Spanish vultures and wolves." It is little wonder that Philip placed a bounty on the prince's head and offered a reward of 25,000 écus to any man who could devise a way to rid Europe of this "enemy of the human race."

In the winter of 1576, William the Silent almost succeeded in uniting the entire Netherlands when Catholics and Calvinists, Dutch and Walloons were shocked into a single community by the sight of Alva's troops putting Antwerp to the sword. November was bitterly cold and cheerless, and Spanish soldiers had been without pay for months. They rose in rebellion and turned upon the fat war profiteers, the rich merchants, and the idle citizens of Antwerp, in a mutinous attempt to reimburse themselves through plunder. During the "Spanish fury," the city was sacked, its women raped, and 7,000 of its inhabitants killed. Throughout the southern Netherlands, horrified Catholics put aside their fear of Calvinists and northern rebels and joined with Holland and Zeeland in the Pacification of Ghent, resolving to fight

together to liberate the entire land from Spanish misrule.

Despite the Spanish atrocities at Antwerp, Philip managed to salvage a portion of his Flemish inheritance and to frustrate William of Orange's hope of total victory. Alva was replaced; he was succeeded first by Don John and then in 1578, by the king's most able diplomat and warrior, Alexander Farnese, the Duke of Parma. Parma won back the southern and Catholic provinces by combining brilliant military tactics with such diplomatic finesse that he soon had Catholics once again hating Calvinists more than Spaniards. Prince William met his match in this Spaniard, whose sense of military timing was unsurpassed and whose calculated moves and use of terrain made William's military efforts look amateurish. Parma was a pick and shovel general, spending more time digging ditches and diverting streams than drilling his men in the use of pike and musket. Yet it was he who transformed Spain's undisciplined and cumbersome army, gleaned from every hamlet of Europe, into an effective fighting force that was not to lose a major battle for the next century.

Spanish successes in the Netherlands might never have been so impressive had not religious and linguistic dissension allowed Parma to drive a wedge between the north and the south. Protestants in the central and southern provinces looked with envy on their brothers in God who had won dictatorial control in Holland, and they unwisely rushed to establish the kingdom of God's elect in the southern regions too. In 1578, a Calvinist coup d'état took place in Ghent, and worried Catholics began to ask themselves whether they had driven Spanish troops out the front door, only to let the soldiers of Satan in the back. By 1579, religious discord had wrecked William of Orange's dream of unifying the Netherlands, and each half of the country went its separate way. The south formed itself into the Catholic Union of Arras, the north into the Union of Utrecht. Divided, the Netherlanders could not resist, and step by step, village by village, canal by canal, the Spaniards inched northward. In desperation, the seven northern provinces took the monumental step of renouncing their allegiance to Philip and proclaiming their independence in 1581, with William of Orange as hereditary stadholder.

Prince William never lived to see Holland fully independent, for three years later, in July 1584, he was killed by a French

fanatic, Balthasar Gérard. In the following year, Antwerp fell to Parma, and all well-informed sources in Europe assured Philip that his Dutch ulcer had been drained of its infection and that the final phase of the war against Holland would be completed within a year. Diplomatic and military pundits reckoned, however, without the interference of Elizabeth of England.

The sixteenth century was no stranger to the fine distinction between hot and cold war. In fact, both Elizabeth and Philip preferred intrigue, diplomatic assassinations, and the quiet fostering of domestic strife to open warfare. Such measures were safe and cheap, and they could always be denied with diplomatic grace. Brinkmanship was an honored art long before the great powers of the twentieth century gave it new meaning in an age of atomic warfare. Ever since 1568, Elizabeth had been calmly - and not so secretly - offering aid and comfort to Philip's rebellious and heretical subjects. Of course, Philip was doing exactly the same for Elizabeth, but that is the story of another chapter. Elizabeth had sanctioned the seizing of a Spanish treasure ship laden with bullion for Alva and his unpaid troops, had given haven to Dutch Sea Beggars and allowed them to dispose of their loot through English commercial channels, and had permitted English volunteers and English capital to strike a blow for God in support of the Netherlands revolt.

In their frustration, Spanish military strategists probably overestimated the amount and effectiveness of Elizabeth's help, but English aid to the Dutch was a handy excuse for Spanish failures. As early as 1577, Philip's regent in the Netherlands, Don John, had excused his inability to stem the revolt on the grounds that "the only remedy for the disorders of the Netherlands is that England should be ruled by someone devoted to Your Majesty. If the contrary case prevails it will mean the ruin of these countries and their loss to your crown." In 1585, when Elizabeth committed the unpardonable diplomatic sin of bringing her unfriendly activities out into the open by sending a small army of 5,000 foot and 1,000 horse soldiers to the Lowlands, Philip reluctantly concluded that his half-brother had spoken the truth. The Spanish king knew England better than most of his advisers, and he feared war with that barbaric race "as a burned child dreads the fire." But Elizabeth gave her brother sovereign no choice. If the dream of Philip's lifetime was to be

fulfilled, the Great Enterprise had to be set in motion. The destruction of a heretical Queen of England would be but the first step in the ultimate spiritual reunification of Europe.

Philip was never sanguine about his prospects of success. From the start, he was aware of the terrible risks involved, but content that God's will should be done. Actually, the vision of re-establishing a medieval Christian empire was not as fantastic as it may seem. Many Christians viewed the prospect as one devoutly to be desired; Protestants and Catholics alike gave lip service to the ideal; and the chances of success after 1585 were probably greater than they had ever been since the time Luther posted his defiance on the doors of Wittenberg Church in 1517. Spain, pillar of the Church and champion of Catholicism, stood at the apex of its military, moral, and economic strength. The riches of the Spanish Indies, which had been worth 213,400 pounds between 1503 and 1505, rose during the five years from 1580 to 1585 to a golden flood of 16,890,000 pounds. No monarch commanded revenues equal to Philip's. The *alcabala* alone - the 10 percent sales tax on all Spanish goods - realized 585,000 pounds, while the kingdom of Castile regularly contributed over 1,400,000 pounds a year to finance "God's obvious design." Spanish soldiers - the mainstay of Philip's army - were the best in the world, toughened in a climate that was "nine months' winter and three months' hell," and so convinced of their own invincibility that it was said that in battle they "postponed fear" to another day. The reputation of Spanish arms was no myth: Parma and his iron legions had seen to that, and the fall of Antwerp encouraged even the cautious Philip to believe that Castilian pikemen and Aragonian musketeers could perform miracles.

Spain was equally triumphant and invincible upon the high seas. Lepanto had been a combined Christian victory, but Spanish ports had supplied half the ships and three-fourths of the manpower. In 1582, Spanish naval prowess was again confirmed when twenty-five Spanish men-of-war and 2,000 troops, under the command of the marquis of Santa Cruz, destroyed a French fleet of sixty great ships and 7,000 men. Impressed by this feat, Philip was inclined to trust Santa Cruz's assurance that he could handle anything the English might send against him.

Diplomatically, Spain stood on a pinnacle. From Malta to

Warsaw, from Buda to Antwerp, Catholicism was triumphant. The infidel was in obvious confusion under the corrupt successors of Suleiman the Magnificent. France was impotent, held ransom to the wishes of Spain by the art of Mendoza and the greed of the Guise family. The Prince of Orange was dead, and the return of the Netherlands to Spain seemed imminent; Antwerp was held by Parma, and his disciplined troops were ready to move northward into Holland or westward into England at a sign from the Escorial. Most important of all, Philip had inherited the treasures of the Portuguese empire, and for the first time had the ports and facilities to outfit an Atlantic fleet to sail against that arsenal of heresy and haven of rebels - Britain.

Ironically it was a Christian defeat at the hands of the infidel that gave Philip his chance to take over the impressive wealth and trade of his Iberian neighbor and to complete the unification of the peninsula. In August 1578, at Alcazarquivir, King Sebastian of Portugal was killed, and his troops massacred by the emperor of Morocco. At once, Philip pressed his claims to the Portuguese throne. Tact, diplomacy, bribery, the influence of the Jesuits, and a carefully planned invasion of the country won still another crown for the King of Spain. In July 1580, he entered his new kingdom preceded by a small army, which had such stringent orders not to pillage the land that the Duke of Alva ran short of ropes with which to hang the offenders. For the first time in 900 years, the Iberian Peninsula was united under a single monarch; for the first time in history, a single empire encircled the earth. In the western hemisphere, Brazil joined New Spain and New Castile to bring all of South and Central America under Spanish control. In Africa, Portuguese trading and supply stations gave Spain a claim to thousands of miles of coastline and a route to the Far East. In Asia, Philip fell heir to Goa, Malabar, and Macao and the heavy Portuguese spice galleons sailing from those ports. Even more important to the destinies of Europe were the quiet coastal towns of Portugal with their docks and shipwrights, and the great port of Lisbon with its protected harbor where an entire armada could safely anchor. Spain now had a wide vista to the west and the 3,000 miles of rolling gray Atlantic, and Philip could seriously consider building a Catholic armada that would cleanse the seas of Dutch Sea Beggars, English pirates and heretics, and open England to the brutal mercies of Parma’s troops.

The King of Spain had more than men and money at his command. Philip's mission was not his own; it was shared by 10 million Spaniards, who had been brought up on the heroic exploits of conquistadors in America, crusaders in Granada, and the magnificent Spanish victories at Pavia, Lepanto, and Antwerp. As Ignatius Loyola had willed himself to be a saint by the power of his imagination, so all of Spain dreamed of a divine venture in which Castilian hidalgos, Catalan priests, and the peasants of Aragon would carry forward the banner of God. Spanish morale was sustained by a fairy tale that everyone from the grand inquisitor to the herdsmen of Navarre believed would someday come true. Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra was not alone in his Castilian conviction that faith and courage could transform romance into reality, fiction into truth; all of Spain agreed with him. Cervantes knew all about the unembellished realities of life. He had accompanied his father on that impecunious and itinerant physician's travels; he had fought beside Spanish veterans in Italy and had been wounded at Lepanto; he had lived as a slave in Algiers and served time in a Spanish prison; yet Cervantes could still rejoice in Spain's Great Enterprise and cheer the Armada on its way. Don Quixote and all of Spain somehow contrived never to look foolish even when mistaking windmills for dragons.

Ruinous inflation and indebtedness, an overtaxed and artificial economy, a mortgaged empire, a population in which 13 percent of the families paid no taxes and did no work and another 25 percent of the adult males wore clerical garb - all this was reality. But who can blame Philip in his land of miracles if he saw himself as the chosen instrument of the Lord and if he agreed with Mendoza writing from distant Paris: "I pray Your Majesty will hasten the Enterprise of England to the earliest possible date, for it would seem to be God's obvious design to bestow upon Your Majesty the crowns of these two kingdoms."

Had Philip and Mendoza been as successful in the tactics of cold war in London and Edinburgh as they were in Paris and Brussels, the contrast between Gloriana's successes and Catherine de Médicis's failures might not have been so great, and the age might have belonged to Philip, not to Elizabeth.

VII

PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT

Sixteenth-century diplomacy had most of the more insane qualities of the Mad Hatter's tea party. Periodically everybody changed seats, but the same old dirty plates remained; ambassadors never meant what they said, but somehow always said what they meant; the riddles of diplomacy were as bewildering as any concocted by the March Hare; and Elizabeth, Mary of Scotland, and Catherine de Médicis were as extraordinary in their diplomatic tastes as any three sisters who lived in a treacle well. For all his shrewdness and secret sources of information, Philip of Spain remained a baffled stranger in this wonderland of international politics. He could never fathom the mind of Catherine, perhaps because it was so deceptively shallow. He regarded Mary as an emotional and thoroughly unreliable female; and he agreed wholeheartedly with his ambassador who reported Elizabeth to be a woman possessed of "a hundred thousand devils," who fooled nobody with her idle chatter about becoming a nun and passing her days in quiet prayer.

Diplomats were as concerned with the pedigrees of monarchs as they were with terms of trade. Society took seriously Philip's claims on behalf of his daughter, Isabella Eugenia, to the thrones of England and France; Elizabeth thought Mary of Scotland's defiant display of the heraldic arms of England on her escutcheon worthy of a diplomatic protest; and English ambassadors regarded it as an insult to be invited to eat with cutlery flaunting such armorial pretensions. Heraldry and the birthrights of kings were more than window dressing left over from a bygone age. They were the only recognizable guidelines for life in a European family of adolescent states. The emerging nations, jealous of their sovereignty and fearful for their internal security, were endeavoring to formalize their relations with each other. Diplomatic procedure remained in its infancy, and its vocabulary had yet to be established; consequently statesmen had to make do with the language of heraldry and dynasty.

Ambassadors as the accredited representatives of nation-states successfully maintained the inviolability of their persons, but they were usually regarded and often behaved as if they were common spies. The principal interest of diplomats was not peace but information, and every resident ambassador in Europe had a carefully organized and well-paid network of informers. The wealthier the kingdom he represented, the more secret his sources of information, for

only the great powers could afford the sums necessary to discover the truth about monarchs, the plots of councilors, and the secret plans of state. Guerau de Spes, the Spanish ambassador in London, had a spy on the Privy Council, and Mendoza, his successor, had an agent in the principal secretary's household. If the information concerned the sovereign, no detail was too trivial to escape the watchful eyes of a diplomat, and Mendoza's spy in the royal laundry even took careful note of Elizabeth's menstrual periods.

In an age that still judged loyalty to kin, region, and God to be as commendable as allegiance to the crown, ambassadors found a ready audience for their tempting proposals and a fertile ground to plant the seeds of treason and discord. All men had their price, though the purchase was not always reckoned in silver. Throughout Europe, men sought a chance to strike a blow for their faith. As a consequence, diplomatic residences in Antwerp, London, Paris, and Amsterdam became the resorts of malcontents, and ambassadors became the provocateurs of treason. Mendoza in London or Paris, Parma's spies in every city of the Netherlands, and Sir Nicholas Throckmorton at the court of Catherine de Médicis spun their webs of intrigue in the best cloak-and-dagger tradition. Secret messages were written in invisible ink that reappeared when the letter was immersed in water; dispatches were invariably in cipher; information was concealed in hollow heels and trick bottle stoppers, or was tucked away in codpieces or in the linings of trunks; and couriers rode swiftly through the night disguised as dentists, priests, and merchants.

In defense, monarchs occasionally jailed or evicted ambassadors, but such actions generally had unpleasant diplomatic repercussions. Usually, it was safer to watch their activities, plant agents in their houses, and hoodwink them with a regular supply of erroneous information, fake traitors, and fabricated conspiracies. In 1571, during the Ridolfi plot to murder Elizabeth, Sir John Hawkins completely fooled the Spanish ambassador by offering, as part of the government's web of counterespionage, to betray the English navy to Spain. De Spes's assurance to his master that "I can discover nothing suspicious about it" is simply further confirmation that Philip was wise not to believe the sanguine opinions of his gullible ambassadors in England.

The constant fear of the assassin's knife added a macabre note to European diplomacy. Elizabeth's councilors were driven to distraction by the queen's total unconcern for even the most elementary precautions for her personal safety. Regicide was a tricky philosophical and moral problem, but the extremes of both faiths endorsed it on the grounds that good might come from evil, and that the godless sovereign was an enemy to the human race. Moreover, political murder was quick and efficient. Remove the vigorous leadership of kings, and the "state doth whole default, the realm is rent in twain in such a loss." The death of Henry II in France was grisly proof of this, and Europe abounded with men anxious to prove it in England as well. Lord Burghley was deeply aware that Elizabeth's crown was "not like to fall to the ground for want of heads that claim to wear it," and he prepared a careful report on "certain cautions for the queen's apparel and diet," warning her to eat nothing that was not prepared and tasted by the royal cooks, to use no perfumes presented by strangers, and to keep her laundry and wardrobe under guard.

For the first ten years of Elizabeth's rule, the "calm and quiet season" prevailed, and though the diplomatic configurations were kaleidoscopically varied, Spain remained safely in a quandary, France in the throes of civil discord, Scotland in the convulsions of Calvinist revolution, and England in the hands of a benevolent deity who arranged to have an embarrassed and unhappy Philip continue as the champion of his heretical sister-in-law. The King of Spain's dilemma was England's greatest safeguard. Mary Queen of Scots was beyond a doubt Elizabeth's legal heir, and in the eyes of many Catholics, she was the rightful ruler of England. But Mary was also a Guise, a member of that acquisitive and predatory clan that had so successfully merged its own destinies with those of France. Throughout crisis and reprisal, plot and counterplot, Philip could never convince himself that he did not prefer heretical Elizabeth, free of French influence, to Catholic Mary, with her French sympathies and Guise uncles.

For almost two decades, Philip permitted his artful sister-in-law to throw dust in his eyes and accepted her ardent assurances that her heresy was nothing but political necessity. He turned the other cheek to the most blatant provocations by English pirates; he read with cold reserve the optimistic reports of ambassadors who urged their intricate

plots to rescue Mary and unseat Elizabeth; and he refused to be stampeded into war with the country that lay athwart his sea lanes to the Netherlands. It was not until 1577, when the Guise family was brought into the Spanish orbit, that Philip's awful perplexity was resolved. Only then could he begin seriously to consider means to rid the Catholic world of the foul, heretical, and unlawful Queen of England.

Ultimately every diplomatic move somehow involved Mary of Scots, who bedeviled the international scene with her charm, her intrigues, her idiocy, and her claims to Elizabeth's throne. Success did not become the enchanting dowager Queen of France. Time and again she proved herself to be petty, deceitful, and self-centered, but Mary was magnificent in defeat, and all her defects were invariably forgiven her. No gown became her so well as the cloak of adversity; no colors could set off the golden red hair, the great dark eyes with their hint of tears, or the heart-shaped lips as did the black of mourning and the scarlet of martyrdom. By any normal standard, she was detestable; as a lady in distress, who could offer her prince valiant the crowns of Scotland and England, she was irresistible and exercised a fascination that brought a host of men far worthier than she ever was to their graves.

From the moment of Francis II's death in 1560, misfortunes beset his seventeen-year-old widow. Her Guise uncles sought a brilliant new marriage for their royal niece, and there was much talk of the nine-year-old Charles IX and of the dwarfed and deranged fifteen-year-old Don Carlos of Spain. Catherine de Médicis, however, refused to have Mary Stuart as her daughter-in-law for a second time. Nor would she countenance having the lordly Guises linked to Spain, and she threatened Philip with an English alliance if he married his son to Mary. Catherine made it clear that Mary's usefulness lay in her claim to the English throne and that her place was among the chilly lochs and cheerless hills of Scotland, where the Catholic faith was in grave peril and the French party had been destroyed by the force of English arms and by John Knox's blasts upon his Calvinist trumpet.

At one time, French interests and culture had predominated at Edinburgh, and Scotland had viewed France as its "auld ally" in the agelong war against the English. James V, that ill-starred, melancholic sovereign, had died in 1542, shamed by the spectacle of his Scottish soldiers floundering in a bog in

their panic to escape an English army. His widow, Mary of Guise, ruled as regent for the week-old Mary Stuart, and six years later, the child queen was whisked off to Paris to be brought up French in anticipation of her marriage to the dauphin of France.

The Scottish clans soon learned to dislike French intervention as much as they had feared and detested English domination. Discontented nobles found in Calvinistic Protestantism a faith that sanctioned their distaste for French interference and provided a godly excuse for liberating Church lands from a government that was controlled by a foreign Catholic power. The new faith, with its severity and rigid righteousness, was peculiarly congenial to these clannish souls independent in their highland fastnesses. John Knox had been preaching against the enemies of "Christ Jesus and his holy evangel" in Scotland with varying results since 1545. He had been forcibly exiled to France and had spent nineteen months in the galleys, where the "grudging and murmuring complaints of the flesh" sharpened both his faith and his temper. After a sojourn at that "perfect school of Christ," Geneva, the Moses of Scotland returned in 1559 to his homeland, where he began to preach a doctrine that found a congenial audience among lairds frustrated both by a French regent and by a Church that seemed to be little more than a corrupt tool of the crown.

Scottish nobles, steeped in the ways of feudal anarchy and independence and convinced by the hard logic of Knox's sermons, were quick to act and banded together to protect the perfect faith and to oppose the queen regent and her French court and policy. In 1557, they convened to form the Congregation of the Lord, a combined Church, army, and parliament of the rebellious faithful. By the summer of 1559, Protestant lairds were in full revolt against Mary of Guise and the French alliance, but it was gradually borne in upon ardent reformers and militant Scottish clans that victory would never be won by God's elect without the assistance of the Queen of England.

Relations between Elizabeth and the Scottish rebels were complicated by Gloriana's repugnance for John Knox, whom she had never forgiven for his tactless blasts against the "monstrous regiment of women" who ruled on earth. Reluctantly Knox assured the queen that his wrath had been

directed toward her sister, Mary Tudor, and the regent of Scotland and that Elizabeth was obviously an exception to an otherwise perfectly valid rule. William Cecil and the English Council wisely considered such a grudging apology to be insufficient and warned the Scottish Protestants that if they wanted English arms and gold they had better muzzle Mr. Knox. As always Elizabeth was reluctant to commit herself or her troops to a course of action from which there was no retreat, but the lairds of the congregation gave her no choice. They were so consistently worsted in battle that Elizabeth was forced to send both her army and navy to Scotland. Ultimately, with the help of British arms and the timely death of the regent, Mary of Guise, the English and Protestant factions triumphed. By the Treaty of Edinburgh, in 1560, French troops were withdrawn, and England and Scotland joined hands in a community of interests for the first time in 300 years. Their strongest bond was a mutual fear of the young queen, Mary, who returned from France on a chill and misty day in August 1561, to rule a nation of rebels and heretics.

Mary landed full of determination to please, but if she thought that Gallic charm and Stuart guile could return her errant kingdom to the Catholic and French fold, she was tragically mistaken. Knox remained dour and unconvinced: "The very face of Heaven," he grumbled, "did manifestly speak what comfort was brought into this country with her - to wit, sorrow, dolor, darkness, and all impiety. . . . If there be not in her a proud mind, a crafty wit, and an indurate heart against God and his truth, my judgment faileth me." In the end, however, it was not religion but dynastic ambition that proved her undoing, for Mary was anxious to exchange her bleak Scottish kingdom for the warmth and luster of Elizabeth's throne. No queen possessed of the granite stubbornness of the Stuarts and educated in the Renaissance brilliance of the French court would ever be satisfied with the crown of Scotland if that of her "dear sister, so tender cousin, and friend" lay within her reach. She bombarded every capital of Europe with matrimonial proposals, schemes to carry forward the Catholic faith and plans to inherit, by force, if necessary, the Tudor crown.

As far as Elizabeth was concerned, the only completely safe solution was for Mary to remain a maiden queen. Relations between the two ladies became chillier with every new

marriage scheme. Elizabeth not only endeavored to frustrate her cousin, she insulted her by making the unbelievable suggestion that Mary should marry that soiled hero of the English court, Robert Dudley, who was suspected of having murdered his wife in the hope of marrying Elizabeth. Mary was furious at such a proposition; she sought a great match, not the worn paramour of a rival queen.

Mary's ultimate choice of a husband was diplomatically ill-considered, and destroyed forever any possibility of happiness either as wife or queen. Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, was the "beardless and lady-faced" grandson by a second marriage of Mary's own grandmother, Margaret Tudor. He was three years the queen's junior, stupid, vicious, and effeminate, but Mary viewed him as "the lustiest and best-proportioned long man" she had ever seen. On July 29, 1565, Mary defied Elizabeth and married the one man guaranteed to antagonize both the English because of his Tudor connections, and the Scottish because he was Catholic. "Woe worth the time," wrote the English ambassador, "that ever the Lord Darnley set foot in this country!" The time of woe descended with unexpected speed. It did not take Mary long to realize the truth about the man she had married primarily for his Tudor blood and his closeness to Elizabeth's throne, and within a year and a half, a double murder had been committed.

Mary of Scotland's marriage to a nobleman, even one of Darnley's ancient lineage and royal blood, underscored the wisdom of Elizabeth's determination to remain single. It is possible that Mary too often disregarded the medieval warning to wives: "Take care thou dost on no account say to him, 'my advice is better than thine' "; but the real trouble lay with Darnley himself. He proved to be a drunken, degenerate, and vainglorious malcontent with neither emotional stability nor moral fiber. He coveted the crown matrimonial and the right to succeed Mary on the throne. When she wisely refused to grant his wish, he sulked and blamed the pernicious influence of the queen's private amanuensis, the Italian David Rizzio, a bass in the royal quartet and the object of Mary's affections. It was "Seigneur Davie" who dined alone with the queen, read to her, played cards with her till two in the morning, and who shared not only her confidence but, as gossip reported it, her bed as well. Darnley regarded himself as a cuckolded husband and

an impotent sovereign, and he determined to have his revenge.

Lord Darnley set about organizing all those who detested Rizzio for his influence and lowly birth or sought to limit the queen's authority. On a Saturday night in March 1566, Darnley's henchmen surrounded Holyrood House, and Darnley and Lord Ruthven broke into the queen's chambers where Mary and Rizzio were at supper. They demanded that Rizzio join them in the anteroom, and when he hid behind the queen's skirts and refused to move, they dragged him shrieking from the room and cut him to pieces with fifty-six thrusts of sword and dagger. Mary, six months pregnant, was at her emotional best. She demanded to know why Darnley had perpetrated such a wicked deed, "considering that I took you from low estate and made you my husband." To the rest of the company she cried out: "I will think upon a revenge." She ordered Rizzio's body to be buried in the royal chapel and gave the dead secretary's office to his eighteen-year-old brother. With gold and fair promises, she set about undermining the alliance of those who had hated Rizzio and laid her plans for revenge upon her husband.

Had the queen planned only the quiet murder of her spouse, she might have kept her throne, for Scotland abounded with men who loathed Darnley, but Mary Stuart mixed love and homicide in proportions fatal to her crown and reputation. From her infatuation with the weak and vicious Darnley, she fell headlong in love with James Hepburn, the Earl of Bothwell, as bad-tempered, impetuous, oversexed, and politically inept a hero as ever tried to rescue a damsel in distress. It was the earl who performed the murder of Darnley, carried off the queen in a carefully prearranged "rape," and finally married her in a Protestant rite. The queen's guilt as a murderer, if not as an adulteress, is open to debate; her innocence has been passionately argued for the last 400 years. Mary may not have known specifically about the conspiracy to lure Darnley to his death, but she certainly must have guessed that some sort of scheme was afoot, and she lent herself as bait to the trap. Her husband had been in Glasgow convalescing from an attack of smallpox, and Mary rushed off in wifely fashion to nurse him and to bring him back to Edinburgh, where he was lodged in a small house in Kirk o' Field, outside the city gates. On February 9, 1567, the queen conveniently remembered a

promise to attend a wedding and failed to sleep that night in her husband's house. Early on the morning of February 10, the city was rocked by an immense explosion; Lord Darnley, his house, and a good part of Kirk o' Field had gone up in dust.

The public was deeply shocked by the news, but Mary might yet have saved herself had she been willing to sacrifice her lover. Instead, she ran away with the Earl of Bothwell, proclaiming that she would "go with him to the world's end in a white petticoat ere she [would] leave him." The sixteenth century could condone murder in a queen, but not impropriety. Mary was acting like a guttersnipe, and the streets of Edinburgh rang with the cry, "Burn the whore!" In June, she was imprisoned, forced to abdicate in favor of her thirteen-month-old son, and persuaded to acknowledge the regency of her half-brother, the Earl of Moray. Bothwell escaped to Denmark, where he died some years later. Scotland had not heard the last of its Stuart queen, however: Less than a year later, she managed an utterly romantic escape and within weeks had collected an army of 6,000 enthusiastic supporters. Enthusiasm, unfortunately, proved no match for the discipline and training of Moray's troops, who encountered Mary's army at Langside, near Glasgow. In forty-five minutes, the battle was over and so was the queen's career in Scotland. Three days later, on May 16, 1568, Mary fled to England, arriving on Elizabeth's doorstep just in time to participate in the first determined effort to remove Gloriana from her throne.

The moment Mary crossed the border and became the embarrassing and difficult "guest" of her Tudor cousin, Elizabeth discovered, as the archbishop of Canterbury remarked, that she had "the wolf by the ears." She dared not send Mary home, where barbarian Scots might venture to execute their divine-right monarch; she feared equally to give her rival sanctuary in England, where Mary was certain to become the magnet for every species of malcontent. The "calm and quiet season" was over for Elizabeth, for the same social, economic, and religious tensions that were tearing France apart were slowly loosening the ties of loyalty in England as well. English Catholics were hearkening to the quickened tempo of religious hysteria across the Channel, and Puritans were beginning to murmur that "no papist can be a good subject." Once again there were uneasy stirrings in the

northern shires, where the word of a Percy, a Neville, or a Darcy was dearer to conservative hearts than the most weighty command of a Tudor queen. The days of private armies had passed, but local influence and patriotism remained strong, and the northern earls were restive as domesticated aristocrats. In the north, Mass was still celebrated despite royal statutes and proclamations, and the parish clergy stubbornly resisted the best efforts of reforming bishops to purge them of their idolatrous ways. The return of the good old days, when men were true to their faith and to their overlord and free from interfering bureaucrats and prying Protestants, was a dream for which men in the northern counties were still willing to risk the gallows.

More was brewing in the north than old-fashioned feudal rebellion: Now traitors looked to Rome and Madrid for aid in destroying the English Jezebel. Their cause was linked to the success of the entire Counter-Reformation, and their conspiracies coincided with the mounting rift between England and Spain. As early as 1566, Elizabeth and Philip had grievances against one another. Gloriana insulted her brother-in-law by sending as her resident ambassador to Madrid a married cleric who lacked both good breeding and good birth. When Philip indignantly ordered him home, Elizabeth was outraged by such arrogance. The same year, English ports were opened to Dutch Sea Beggars - rebels, pirates, and heretics, Philip called them - and English money and volunteers were sent to foster rebellion in the Spanish Netherlands. By 1568, the cold war was warming up. Elizabeth condoned piracy against Spanish ships in the Caribbean and the Channel, and when Philip retaliated in September 1568, by almost annihilating Sir John Hawkins's third slave - trading expedition to the New World, the two nations seemed on the brink of war.

In December 1568, Philip's patience all but broke. A Genoese merchantman, heavily laden with gold loaned to Spain for the payment of Alva's troops in the Netherlands, was confiscated when it put into an English port to escape Dutch pirates. Elizabeth promptly seized the bullion and impudently renegotiated the loan with the Italian bankers. Outraged, Philip placed an embargo on English shipping to the Netherlands, and Elizabeth countered by freezing Spanish assets in England. At this propitious moment, Mary Stuart sent a message to the Spanish ambassador "that if his master

will help me, I shall be Queen of England in three months, and Mass shall be said all over the country."

Mary, with her French ways and Highland wit, was proving to be a most unwelcome guest in England. She stole every heart, with a tear-stained smile for one, a diamond ring for another, and a well-phrased promise to all who dreamed of riches and of high office. Mary could offer anyone what Elizabeth Tudor kept only for the crowned heads of Europe - the hope of matrimony and the vision of a throne. The man who was "brought abed" by such a dream was the Duke of Norfolk, Elizabeth's cousin and the ranking peer of the realm. Thomas Howard, the fourth Duke of Norfolk, was a simple man, unable to perceive the folly of his actions, though intelligent enough to proceed cautiously. He should have known better. It was not by accident that he was England's sole remaining duke, for the Tudors never looked kindly on too much princely blood or feudal independence, and the life expectancy of a member of the Norfolk house was not great. His great-grandfather, the Duke of Buckingham, had been executed for treason in 1521; his grandfather had been imprisoned and his father executed for the same offense in 1546. His cousins, Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard, had fared no better as the wives of Henry VIII. But Stuart smiles blinded him to Tudor scowls, and he allowed himself to be talked of as a prospective husband for the woman who might yet unite the thrones of England and Scotland.

By the spring of 1569, the devil's brew had reached the boiling point. The earls of Westmoreland and Northumberland were armed and waiting in the north; Guzman de Silva, the Spanish ambassador in London, was busy plotting with Catholics and court factions; courtiers opposed to William Cecil were looking hopefully toward Mary and Norfolk; a papal anathema declaring Elizabeth a heretic and divesting her of her divinity was being prepared at Rome; Philip had written to Alva to ascertain the cost and effort required to unseat Elizabeth and restore the Queen of Scots to her rightful throne; and Mary was waiting expectantly at her residence at Tutbury to be rescued by an army of gallant heroes. Had Philip been less cautious, had Alva been willing to risk his disciplined troops in England, had the papal thunder been better timed, had the feudal lords in the north been slightly more powerful, had Norfolk been more courageous and de Silva's assassination plots better conceived, the Elizabethan

age might have ended in civil and international war. As it was, the wheel of fortune still turned in Elizabeth's favor. The queen lived, and her enemies were once again confounded.

England and Spain approached war, then hurriedly retreated, for both Elizabeth and Philip were reluctant to commit their countries to the final ordeal of arms. A rising in the north was crushed during the winter of 1569-70, and 800 feudal tenants paid with their lives for their devotion to a dying way of life. The hum of the spinning wheel and the ring of the coal miner's pike were slowly drowning out the voice of the feudal magnate. Almost as an afterthought, Pius V ineptly issued the long-deferred bull of excommunication against Elizabeth in February 1570. His anathema fell on deaf ears; at home the queen was closer to the hearts of her subjects than ever before; abroad Philip was too preoccupied with rebellion in the Netherlands and Turkish penetration in the Mediterranean to put teeth into an otherwise harmless papal threat. The only consequence of the proclamation was to darken the lives and burden the hearts of good English Catholics who, until Elizabeth was excommunicated, could at least remain loyal to the queen without violating their consciences.

Though triumphant, Elizabeth was still saddled with her Stuart cousin, who seemed to thrive on adversity and derive renewed hope from every defeat. Councilors advised the queen that she had taken to her heart "the daughter of sedition, the mother of rebellion, the handmaid of iniquity, and the sister of unshamefastness." Yet Elizabeth persisted in viewing Mary as an anointed queen who must be treated with respect and, if possible, restored to the throne of Scotland. Unfortunately, Mary Stuart never learned from experience. She sat placidly among her ladies, her nimble fingers embroidering exquisite needlepoint and her fertile mind spinning clever conspiracies, the central theme of which was always Elizabeth's death. Even her own brother-in-law, Charles of France, was moved to exclaim: "Ah! the poor fool will never cease until she loses her head."

The same words might have been said about Norfolk, who had learned nothing about the dangerous consequences of treason when he escaped with only a brief term in prison and a warning after the fiasco of the northern rebellion. Within a year, both the duke and the exiled queen were irresponsibly enmeshed in one of the more brainless conspiracies of the

century, concocted by the ebullient Roberto di Ridolfi, a Florentine banker in London and a secret agent of the pope. In its final form, the plot proposed that Alva land at Portsmouth with 10,000 troops and march on London, where Norfolk would seize the queen, rescue Mary Stuart and marry her, and restore the Catholic faith. Everyone except Alva was taken in by the polished and enthusiastic Italian, and even Philip put aside his Cassandra-like fears for dreams of success. Ridolfi's intrigues fared no better than the more realistic plans of the northern earls. Norfolk was arrested for a second time and finally executed in June 1572; the Spanish ambassador was unceremoniously shipped back to Spain, and Elizabeth gave up any pretense of dealing with Mary Stuart as a sister queen and blood cousin. Mary was imprisoned in Sheffield Castle at a cost to Elizabeth of fifty-two pounds a week, but most Englishmen continued to complain that she still was not treated for what she was - "a monstrous and huge dragon" of sedition.

There is no doubt that had Elizabeth listened to her Parliament, Mary of Scotland would have died in 1572. Loyal Englishmen were convinced that she was an immoral and dangerous female, and they were determined to "cut off her head and make no more ado about her," but Elizabeth could not bring herself to execute a divinely ordained sovereign. To do so was impolitic (it would set a dangerous precedent) and immoral (Mary was one of God's lieutenants on earth). So Mary Stuart lived on another fifteen years, surrounded by English spies but still possessed of a queen's household and always confident that some new plot might yet succeed.

For ten of those years, there was relative quiet in Sheffield: just the usual letters to Philip, the pope, the Duke of Guise, and Mary's son, King James of Scotland, all successfully smuggled out of the castle, and all urging her friends and relatives to strike a blow for God and the Stuart cause. Around 1581, the tempo of international intrigue began to quicken as Mary gained renewed hope from abroad. The house of Guise had moved into the Spanish orbit, and Philip was beginning to consider seriously the militant advice of his new ambassador in London, Bernardino de Mendoza, who inaccurately reported that England was in such a state that "if even so much as a cat moved the whole edifice would crumble down in three days." The ambassador was not a man who let nature take its course, and in 1583, he plotted with a

young English Catholic, Francis Throckmorton, to raise the Catholic gentry, rescue Mary, and assassinate Elizabeth. When Throckmorton was arrested he did not long withstand interrogators, who twisted the handle of the rack to give emphasis to their questions. In the end the tortured man, revealing every detail of the conspiracy to Secretary Walsingham, could only whisper, "Faith broken, honor lost." Throckmorton died on the scaffold, Mary's mild imprisonment gave way to a closer watch and less friendly jailers, and Mendoza, to his lasting indignation, was ordered home as a common disturber of the peace. "Tell your mistress," he haughtily informed the English guard who saw him off at Dover, "that Bernardino de Mendoza was born not to disturb kingdoms but to conquer them!"

The Spanish ambassador's defiance was in accord with the prevailing wind from the Escorial. England had to be conquered and punished. If the assassin's knife could not reach Elizabeth, then Parma's troops would have to assume the task so necessary to God's purpose. In London, the queen's ministers were justifiably frightened. William of Orange had been murdered in his own house at Delft in June 1584. Six months later, the Privy Council got wind that a Doctor William Parry, reformed burglar, ex-spy, and member of Parliament, planned to assassinate Elizabeth with a bullet blessed by Rome. In August 1585, Parma's troops swept into Antwerp. It seemed inevitable that next they would either strike northward against a demoralized and ill-led Dutch and English army or, if Philip gave the order, move against that source of all heresy and sedition, England itself.

As war grew steadily closer and the plots to murder the queen grew more desperate, patriotic feeling in Parliament and the Privy Council exploded into a terrible anger against Mary Stuart. It seemed monstrous that the cankered heart of treason should go unpunished, that an avowed adulteress, murderer, and arch liar should continue to live. Years earlier, John Knox had warned that "if ye strike not at the root, the branches that appear to be broken will bud again." To angry Puritans, frightened ministers, and loyal Englishmen, it was clear that Mary of Scotland was the root of all evil. The problem was how to make Elizabeth see her cousin for what she really was - a common traitor. The mantle of her divinity had to be torn aside so that even Elizabeth would no longer believe her cousin's regal and pious assurances of innocence.

In the end, the Queen of Scotland was destroyed by her own insatiable passion for intrigue and caught by her own cunning. First the trap had to be laid, then baited. Mary was moved to Chartley House, in Essex, where all means of communication with the outside world were closed, save one. The exception appealed to Mary's fondness for mystery. Her letters were smuggled in and out of Chartley House in waterproof packages slipped through the bungholes of beer kegs. News from abroad arrived in the French ambassador's diplomatic pouch and was sent on to Mary, but before it was placed in the beer kegs it was deciphered, read, and copied by Elizabeth's principal secretary, Francis Walsingham. The system satisfied everyone: Mary was lulled into a false feeling of security and received secret news from Europe for the first time in years; Walsingham learned everything Mary read or wrote and waited patiently for his victim to enmesh herself in still another plot; and the astute brewer was handsomely paid by both Mary and Walsingham and received an inflated price for his beer as well.

Walsingham did not have to wait long for the unsuspecting flies to walk into his parlor. First a priest named John Ballard entered. He assured Mary that 60,000 Spanish soldiers were waiting to rescue her, and informed Philip that an equal number of Catholics would rush to arms once Parma's troops landed in England. Then came Anthony Babington, who gave his name to the plot; and finally John Savage, who had taken a great oath to kill Elizabeth. All that Walsingham needed was written evidence that Mary Stuart was a party to the conspiracy. On July 17, 1586, she fell into the trap and wrote Babington expressing her fervent approval of what he and his colleagues proposed to do. Walsingham had all the evidence he required. The assassins were promptly rounded up, Mary's two secretaries were arrested, and Elizabeth was persuaded to permit the trial of her cousin for attempted murder.

When Mary Stuart stood trial for her life before thirty-six commissioners on October 11, Puritans and privy councilors had achieved their purpose: the legal prosecution of a divine-right sovereign and her condemnation as a public menace to the Tudor crown. As usual, however, Mary of Scotland stole the show with an infuriating and infectious performance. She haughtily denied all knowledge of the Babington plot; she passionately protested that queens could not be tried by anyone except God Himself; and when her enemies had done

their worst, she dismissed the damning evidence with a smile, saying: "God forgive you lawyers, for you are so sore fellows. God bless me and my cause from your laws, for it is a very good matter that they cannot make seem bad."

The demand for Mary's life now reached a crescendo, and Parliament, without a dissenting vote, petitioned the queen that Mary of Scotland be executed. Still Elizabeth hesitated. She had lived with Mary for so long that to put her hand to her cousin's death warrant was like ordering the execution of a part of herself. Who knew what terrible events might descend from heaven in retribution for destroying an anointed queen? How would James VI of Scotland react to the execution of his mother? What would Henry III of France do to avenge the death of his sister-in-law? And the greatest mystery of all: What about that leaden colossus, the King of Spain? In vain Elizabeth's councilors assured her that, to James, the hope of succeeding to the crown of England was more important than his mother's life, that Henry III cared nothing for his hysterical relative, and that Philip was no more dangerous to England as Mary's avenger than he had been as her rescuer. Still the queen held back, and she dropped broad hints that if Mary had to die, then it would be best to have her choked with a pillow or silenced with poison. She ordered her secretary to write Mary's jailer to inquire whether he would perform the task, but Sir Amias Paulet's Puritan conscience would have none of it. He wrote back refusing to "make so foul a shipwreck of my conscience as to shed blood without law or warrant." Elizabeth dared procrastinate no longer, and on February 1, she called for pen and ink and signed the death warrant, but even then she side-stepped the responsibility of sending it to Fotheringay, where Mary was imprisoned. After signing it, she threw it to the floor, and when her Scottish secretary, William Davison, asked her pleasure, she answered vaguely that the document should be taken to the Lord Chancellor to be sealed and recorded. The Privy Council well knew the queen's ways, and Burghley, Walsingham, Leicester, and others quietly dispatched the warrant to Fotheringay without further ado.

The execution took place on a cold Wednesday morning in February. The great hall at Fotheringay was cleared of its tables and chairs and turned into a death chamber. In the center, opposite a blazing log fire, was placed a three-foot-high wooden platform, draped in black cloth, upon which

stood a straight-backed chair and the axing block. Late, as usual, and dressed in black velvet with a lace kerchief at her throat and a white veil over her auburn-gold locks, Mary entered the hall, walked serenely to the scaffold, and seated herself on the chair to listen to the reading of the warrant signed by her royal cousin. Stubborn and disobedient were the words used. No one doubted the first, but many thousands, including Elizabeth herself, wondered whether a divine-right queen could justly be called disobedient, and if so, to whom?

Even at the eleventh hour, the dean of Peterborough sought to win Mary from her faith and tactlessly urged her to repent, for "the hand of death," he said, "is over your head, and the axe is put to the root of the tree." The queen calmly bid him be silent. "Peace, Master Dean, you have nothing to do with me, nor I with you." The supreme moment had arrived, and no one knew better than Mary Stuart how to play her part or how becoming was the red of martyrdom. The black velvet cloak fell from her, and she knelt ready for death in bodice and petticoat of scarlet silk. Twice the ax struck, and Mary Stuart's head tumbled to the wooden floor. The executioner reached down to grasp the severed head by the hair and hold it aloft, and as he swung his grisly burden high, he shouted: "God save the queen." Suddenly the romantic legend was shattered, and the truth was revealed for all to see: In his hand the executioner held not a head but a golden wig, and on the floor rolled the cropped, white-haired head of the Queen of Scotland.

Londoners went mad with joy at the news and came close to burning the city to the ground in a frenzy of bonfires and merrymaking. The good citizens believed that a new era had begun in which all men would live without fear now that the source of so much evil had been destroyed. Elizabeth knew otherwise, and she wept and raged at her Council and vowed to have poor Davison's head in revenge. How many of those tears were sincere, how many politic, no one can say. Doubtless many were shed for diplomatic reasons: Henry III had lost a sister, James VI a mother, and it behooved Elizabeth to weep at a tragedy ostensibly committed without her knowledge and against her will. She grieved that she had ever signed the warrant, and passionately assured the crowned heads of Europe that she had had no intention of executing it. Still other tears were directed in fury at

councilors who had failed to do away with Mary Stuart in her sleep, and who had now confronted the queen with a public execution and an international scandal. Finally, a few tears must have fallen for a sister queen, a dead cousin, and an old rival.

For all the charm that had incited Norfolk, Babington, Throckmorton, and a host of others to treason, for all her regal blood and royal titles, Mary Stuart remained a pawn on the international chessboard, and her death did not affect the final conclusion of the game one whit. Long before Mary died, the King of Spain had made up his mind that his Great Enterprise was God's will, and that once he had won England, the Netherlands would fall too, for it was "God's obvious design" that he should "lay down the law for the whole world." Elizabeth, too, had come to recognize that the paths of England and Spain must meet in violence, and in her heart she believed, with navigator John Davys, that Englishmen were the saved people, predestined to "give light to all the rest of the world." The odds had been taken, the sides drawn, and Europe waited and speculated on which of them, Elizabeth of England or Philip of Spain, would prove to be the shining messenger of the Lord.

VIII

THE GREAT ENTERPRISE

A glow envelops the story of the defeat of the Invincible Armada, distorting and dramatizing a battle that was actually unsatisfactory though it was captained by heroes who conquered Catholic Spain and won for Gloriana the command of the seas. Freedom triumphed over tyranny, human courage prevailed, and a chosen few stood fast against a multitude.

From the start, the Great Enterprise of 1588 was grounded on the highly unlikely proposition that Philip's ships, laden with men and arms, could rendezvous with the Duke of Parma, reinforce his troops, and escort them from Flanders to England. All the logistic and strategic thinking that had gone into the Armada - the orders not to engage the enemy until the Channel was reached, the decision to anchor off Calais, the proportions of cannonballs to musket shot, of sailors to soldiers, of men to animals - was based on a false assumption. Parma knew it and begged for time to seize a deep-water port before the fleet sailed. Parma's adversaries, the Dutch seamen, who navigated with ease in their flyboats through a maze of shoals, sandbars, and islands, knew it. Even Philip knew it, for Luis Cabrera de Cordoba, who reported Parma's warnings, bluntly informed the king: "It is going to be impossible for the Duke of Parma's ships ever to meet the Armada." Spanish oceangoing galleons were too deep in draught to approach Dunkirk, he said, and Dutch coastal sloops could prevent Parma's barges from ever leaving the harbor. Echoing the duke's own opinion, Cabrera asked a crucial question: "Why not give it up now and save much time and money?" Why not, indeed!

The answer lay deep within the mind of the man who secluded himself behind the granite walls of the Escorial. The Armada did not spring fully armed from the brow of Philip the Prudent; it was the work of a mind incapable of great imaginative bounds, a brain that inched, never leaped, to a conclusion. The decision to invade England was made only after every other possibility had been thoroughly considered and dismissed. The heretical poison that Elizabeth was spreading throughout Christendom could be stopped only at its source, by the invasion of an island protected by the rolling breakers and capricious breezes of the Atlantic. Philip, better than anyone on his council, knew the risks involved: the uncertainty of wind and current, the improbability that devout English Catholics would rush to arms, the appalling

odds against victory in a naval engagement fought 500 miles from home and in waters where every cove and eddy were familiar to the enemy. Philip had turned to the best advice available anywhere in Europe. Don Alvaro de Bezán, marquis of Santa Cruz and Admiral of the Ocean Sea, had urged the king first to destroy English naval power in the Channel and then to seize the island at his leisure. The cost of such an operation was too great; the admiral had demanded 510 sailing vessels, forty galleys, six galleasses, 94,000 men, and provisions for eight months. The king realized the economic absurdity of his plan and sought the opinion of the Duke of Parma, who suggested that an army of 34,000 infantry and cavalry might conceivably be ferried across from Flanders in a single night if complete surprise could be achieved. Even Philip regarded the element of surprise as "hardly possible." So from among a half-dozen impossibilities, a theoretically feasible scheme was devised: a much smaller navy would be assembled at Lisbon, large enough to terrify the English but designed more to convoy Parma's barges to the Thames estuary than to engage an English fleet. This plan was to be the instrument of God's victory and the endeavor to which Philip and the entire Spanish empire bent every effort.

God's will never burst upon Philip like a beacon in the night, for the king did not presume to know God's purpose. Yet it seemed manifest that the Lord must desire the destruction of the English Jezebel. If the Armada was the only way of achieving a purpose so obviously in accord with the divine design, then God could be depended upon to sustain the faithful and give them victory. The mathematical odds meant nothing when fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Lord. Lepanto had been clear proof of that. When Philip planned the fleet that destroyed Muslim sea power, he had no clear notion of how victory could be achieved so far from Spain and so deep within Islamic waters. He had been content to labor quietly in the Lord's vineyard, and it had been sufficient that his Christian fleet was dedicated to a holy purpose. Philip the Prudent had been willing to risk all on a single engagement against the infidel at the battle of Lepanto. Now, seventeen years later, he was satisfied once again to leave the details of victory to God.

Caught up in his sense of mission, he began to lose sight of the distinction between fact and fancy. It was enough that God's Armada should sail. Such questions as how Parma's

barges and Sidonia's great galleons could meet and what wind would drive the attacking Dutch flyboats back to Flushing could safely be left to Providence. Nor was Philip's confidence entirely misplaced. The age of miracles had not passed, and during the hair-raising moments when the Catholic Armada was within inches of running aground upon the sands of Dunkirk, there were wonders aplenty. The only trouble was that God failed to give Spanish sailors and soldiers anything more than valor with which to defend ships that were technologically outdated, as obsolete in relation to their English opponents as bombers are in comparison with intercontinental missiles.

The real tragedy was that the Armada was the best fleet of its kind. Upon it had been lavished the riches of the Indies, the ceaseless labors of shipwrights, victualers, ironmongers, and carpenters, and the fervent prayers of an entire kingdom. For its 2,431 heavy guns and long-muzzled culverins, 123,790 cannonballs had been transported to Lisbon from every province of Philip's empire. Unheard of quantities of powder and shot for small arms were piled high on the wharves. Salt fish and hard biscuits were brought in from Andalusia, hemp and tar from the Baltic, and oil from southern Italy. Almost every race and nationality - Castilian peasants, French adventurers, Moorish slaves, Italian mercenaries - were packed into ships that had been begged, borrowed, built, and stolen in every corner of Europe. On paper, at least, the Armada was, indeed, invincible.

Once he had determined that this fleet was to be God's sword "for the triumph of His cause," Philip could not wait to see it forged, sharpened, and made ready to strike. Yet setbacks, delays, dishonesty, and disasters hindered every step of the way. Disease and malnutrition attacked mariners and landsmen while the Armada lay in harbor, fouling its own berth and consuming meat, fish, and hardtack as fast as they could be brought in by oxcart and barge. Ships expected to be seaworthy fighters turned out to be hulks, their rigging rotten and their hulls sprung, while their crews were peasant boys more accustomed to the plow than the topsail. In desperation, Philip deluged his captains with instructions and wrote endlessly to the shipyards at Algeciras, the naval arsenal at Lisbon, and the military warehouses at Barcelona, worrying them with a single theme: "Success depends mostly upon speed. Be quick!" Creaking and groaning in every joint,

the Spanish military colossus made ready while Philip buzzed, nagged, and fretted in his impatience to launch his Great Enterprise.

Then on April 29, 1587, a disaster struck the Armada that delayed its sailing for a year. Sir Francis Drake, with twenty-five of the queen's stoutest and fastest ships, appeared among the moored galleys and merchantmen, the loaded freighters and galleons being refitted in Cadiz harbor. Santa Cruz's own warship was in port, newly launched, tied up, and waiting for armaments and stores; so were sixty other vessels, possibly half of them were being readied for the great fleet gathering at Lisbon. Sir Francis arrived with instructions "to impeach the joining together of the King of Spain's fleets," and once in the harbor, the terrible Drake was like a fox in a chicken coop. Throughout the night, he systematically scuttled or burned some thirty vessels, paying scant heed to the Spanish cannonade from the forts of Cadiz, and brushing off the ineffectual darts and sorties of the swift but lightly armed Spanish galleys. "The loss," said Philip, "was not very great, but the daring of the attempt was very great indeed." The loss was to be greater than the king imagined, for Drake had just begun. From Cadiz, he swept up the Spanish and Portuguese coasts, pillaging shipping and plundering fishing villages. Mean and petty work it may have been, but when the Armada finally sailed, the fish supply was meager and inferior, the barrels leaked, and the food was spoiled. Sir Francis Drake had played havoc with the Andalusian fishing industry and had destroyed the supply of well-seasoned barrel staves and iron hoops set aside to make kegs for the food and water that would keep men and animals alive on the long voyage from Lisbon to Calais.

By May 1588, the Armada was finally ready. Ships had been tarred, caulked, and freshly painted, supplies had been stored away, galleons and merchantmen had been rebuilt to conform to the traditional Spanish idea of warships as floating castles, crews had been assigned, soldiers taken aboard, and Medina Sidonia, the captain general of the fleet, was reasonably satisfied that everything humanly possible had been done to organize a naval host that spoke six different languages and consumed its supplies even faster than they rotted in damp holds and leaky barrels. There were 19,290 Castilian and Portuguese soldiers, 8,350 sailors, 1,000 gentlemen volunteers from every noble household in Spain, 600 monks,

priests, and chaplains, innumerable servants, physicians, surgeons, ordnance experts, and over 2,000 Turkish, Moorish, and heretic slaves, who labored at the oars of the light galleys and the heavy galleasses, packed into a fleet that numbered 130 sails and weighed less in total tonnage than the present-day liner the *Queen Mary*.

The fighting heart of the Armada was the twenty Portuguese and Castilian galleons, great lumbering fortresses carrying up to fifty-two guns, their main timbers four and five feet thick. They were built high in the stern and wide in the beam to give their musketeers an elevated platform from which to rake the enemy with gunshot and to cast grappling hooks to prevent his escape. In addition to the clumsy galleons, which rolled, plunged, and required a mild hurricane to move them, there were four Italian galleasses, each mounting fifty guns and rowed by 300 slaves. They were larger, heavier, and more seaworthy than the light-oared Mediterranean galleys, yet they could outmaneuver the galleons and match their firepower. The second line of the Armada consisted of forty merchantmen and carracks, some of them so large that "the ocean groaned under their weight," and all of them armed primarily to defend themselves from Barbary pirates and Muslim corsairs. The largest of the merchantmen, the Portuguese East Indiamen, were gigantic tubs, slow, seaworthy, and practical. They had been refitted and rearmed and constituted a fighting force almost as formidable as the galleons. No fleet could do without its pinnaces, the light, nimble sloops that were the eyes, ears, and maids of all work of the navy. Medina Sidonia had managed to collect thirty-four of these useful vessels. This vast assemblage was expected to escort some two dozen supply ships, laden with men, horses, and siege guns for Parma's invading army, vessels that could not defend themselves in a fight but that would contribute to the awful majesty of the Armada.

The man who sailed in command of a fleet "wonderful, great, and strong" was peculiarly unfit for his position, not because he was a self-confessed landlubber who easily caught cold, was always sick at sea, and had begged Philip not to place him in command of "so important an enterprise," but because Don Alonso Pérez de Guzman, the Duke of Medina Sidonia, was not a man who could call forth miracles. Efficiency, loyalty, calmness, affability, and honor were qualities that the duke possessed in abundance; he was, in fact, a splendid and

soothing chief of staff, but the virtues for which Philip selected him as the successor to that grizzled old seadog Santa Cruz ultimately destroyed him. Medina Sidonia was the product of generations of aristocratic breeding; his house had long since been squeezed dry of any vitality, and all that remained was dignity. The duke was personally dedicated, hard-working, and invariably did the right thing. Throughout the disaster of the Armada, there is scarcely a decision that he made for which he can be condemned. As a Christian he was magnificent, as an admiral he was blameless, but as a leader of men he was a total failure, for Medina Sidonia could not inspire in his subordinates that extra ounce of nerve, that wild belligerence, and the endurance that in the end wins battles and performs miracles.

In one quality alone, the new Admiral of the Ocean Sea was well suited to his command: He was a nobleman of deep and unfanatical devotion, emphatically believing that the Armada was sailing on a divine mission, and the men who worked the guns and climbed the rigging were embarking on a crusade to restore the true faith to England and liberate the tens of thousands of faithful Catholics who had suffered privation and suppression at the hands of the heretics. The papal excommunication against Elizabeth had been reissued, and it was now the holy duty of the Armada to enforce that sentence against a queen who was branded "an incestuous bastard, begotten and born in sin of an infamous courtesan, Anne Boleyn." The list of Elizabeth's great transgressions was disgustingly long. She was a profaner of the sacraments, persecutor of the faithful, suppressor of the old nobility, protector of profligates and licentious minions, prostituter of God's Word, torturer of innocent priests, who were systematically torn upon the rack and dismembered in public, murderer of the cousin who was lawfully entitled to her crown, and finally a scourge of God and the shame of womanhood. The destruction of such a foul and monstrous dragon of heresy could not be accomplished in a spirit of revenge or conquest. It could only be achieved in righteousness, and officers and men, sailors and soldiers were ordered to confess and hear Mass before setting sail. Gambling and swearing were outlawed, prostitutes were forbidden on board, and no unclean thing or person was allowed to accompany so sublime a venture. Medina Sidonia himself, passing through lines of kneeling crusaders, bore to

the Armada the holy standard of the fleet from the high altar of the cathedral of Lisbon.

Throughout the fleet, every seaman and soldier thrilled to a sense of moral superiority, which more than compensated for the sour taste of military inferiority. It was not too much to count on God's help against barbarous, heretical people who made no account of soul or conscience, disobeyed Him, disregarded the saints, and mocked the pope. "So we are sailing against England," said one Spanish sea captain, "in the confident hope of a miracle" that will send "some strange freak of weather" or will deprive "the English of their wits." Without a miracle, he added, the heretics would knock the Armada "to pieces with their culverins." These words were not intended as a grim prophecy but as a straightforward statement of the consequences of not having God on one's side. When the fleet finally took to sea, Spanish confidence was just as firm as that of the enemy, but it was of a different brand. It was based on the inability of an entire realm to entertain seriously the possibility that a mission supported by the Church and the entire heavenly hierarchy could be defeated; English confidence was grounded on an equally sublime conviction that their cause was just and on the knowledge that their ships, captains, and tactics were superior to those of the enemy.

The English had good cause to be confident. It was no idle dream when Sir Francis Drake bragged to Walsingham that he doubted "not but ere it be long so to handle the matter with the Duke of Sidonia as he shall wish himself at St. Mary Port among his orange trees." The English had the best navy afloat and the most dreaded and celebrated captains in Europe, especially *El Draque*, Drake "the Dragon," whose vanity was without equal but who was not overstating the case when he said he knew what great fear his name inspired all along the coast of Spain. His reputation alone was worth the mightiest galleon in the queen's navy.

When Elizabeth's subjects prayed to God to "set a wall" about England and "evermore mightily defend it," they might also have raised their voices in thanks to the queen's father, old King Henry. It was he who had built the dockyards from which Elizabeth's great ships slipped into the sea, and it was he who had reorganized the admiralty so that a navy existed, at least on paper, even in peacetime. By 1588, England had

eighteen heavy men-of-war, built according to the revolutionary and imaginative notions of Sir John Hawkins, the treasurer of the navy, and the shipwrights of Bristol, Portsmouth, and Plymouth. Pumps had been improved, rigging modified, hawsers lengthened, but the most basic change was in the shape and proportions of the hulls. Reflecting a new approach to naval war and the function of the galleon in battle, the English did away with the towering superstructure of the traditional warship, and streamlined their vessels by increasing their length, cutting down on their width, and leveling off their deck lines. The lofty castles at bow and stern, which added so to a ship's weight and made them so difficult to sail, were discarded; and the pit, or center, where reserve contingents of soldiers huddled, protected by the thick sides of the galleons, was planked over to make two new decks for heavy, ship-destroying guns. The new silhouette was the technological expression of a tactical revolution that no longer treated the sailing vessel as a means of conducting land war at sea, but as an instrument of destruction suited to the ocean. Sink the enemy, rather than capture him like some fortress: this was the aim of English sea captains in their trim warships that could outpoint, outmaneuver, and out-sail anything the Spanish had afloat.

Along with the new hull design came the introduction of lighter but more numerous guns that could hurl a nine-pound shot half a mile. Spanish guns were heavier and could heave a thirty-pound ball with indifferent accuracy about a quarter of a mile if the nine-foot barrel did not happen to explode. On both sides, naval gunnery was still in its infancy. The amount of powder, the strength of the barrel, and the timing of the charge in synchronization with the roll of the ship were largely matters of guesswork, and neither fleet had any real idea of how many cannonballs would be needed to sink a galleon or at what range a nine-pound shot hurled at high velocity or a thirty-pounder thrown less violently would penetrate the thick timber of a man-of-war. The Spanish thought of their massive cannons as siege guns. They assumed that the real work would be done by popguns or mortars designed to destroy men, not ships, but they had nevertheless brought with them what they imagined to be an overabundance of heavy ammunition - fifty rounds per cannon. The English carried fewer cannonballs, and Drake was evidently willing to meet the enemy with only thirty

rounds per gun, even though English tactics called for staying well away from the Spanish ships with their deadly musketeers and grappling hooks, and using their own greater mobility and longer-range culverins to fire broadside after broadside into the Armada. The English, however, were prepared to experiment with new methods of war and could always replace their cannon shot; the Spanish could do nothing but close in and attempt to board the enemy. When instead they received salvos of iron fired at long range, they could answer only with guns that could not reach the enemy and ammunition that could not be replaced.

The fundamental problem for the English was not how to win the battle but how to maintain a fleet in readiness against an enemy whose exact time of arrival was unknown and whose plans were uncertain. On this point, Elizabeth and her seadogs clashed. Drake's advice, sent from Cadiz in 1587, had been explicit: "Prepare in England strongly and most by sea!" Elizabeth was equally insistent: Ships were financial monsters, and she was too poor to feed them. Her army in Holland, that "sieve that spends as it receives to little purpose," was eating up 126,000 pounds a year; she had raised another 50,000 pounds with which to pay a German army to invade France and destroy the Catholic Duke of Guise; and she had promised to scrape together still another subsidy to keep Henry of Navarre from total bankruptcy. It was costing the queen at least 12,000 pounds a month to feed, arm, and pay a fully mobilized fleet, and all this had to be done on a yearly peacetime income of 250,000 pounds. In the circumstances, it is little wonder that Lord Burghley sourly observed that "a man would wish, if peace cannot be had, that the enemy would no longer delay, but prove, as I trust, his evil fortune," or that Gloriana constantly maintained the fiction that she was not and had no intention of ever being at war with Spain, and that her greatest desire was to see Philip's rebellious Dutch subjects returned to their true allegiance once again. Neither Philip nor the queen's sea captains agreed with her or believed her, but at least such a pretense allowed Elizabeth to keep her fleet in mothballs and to spare her war chest. Except for full mobilization resulting from a false alarm in December 1587, the thrifty sovereign kept her fleet in dock, partly decommissioned and only half-staffed, thus saving herself over 2,000 pounds a month. Even during the summer of 1588, when she finally permitted full

mobilization of a fleet of about 200 ships, she complained that the cost was bankrupting her.

The queen's worries did not end with finding the fourteen shillings a month that it took to feed and pay a single seaman or with collecting the stores of food for a fleet that ate up most of its provisions before even venturing out of harbor. Despite half measures and penny pinching, Elizabeth's naval arm remained strong; the greatest danger was from the unknown enemy lurking within the kingdom, the nightmare of a Catholic fifth column, wherein lay hid "the secret treasons of mind and heart."

Everyone was aware of the rottenness of the home defenses: English cities were unwalled, ungarrisoned, and defenseless; stout English yeomen had grown soft and fat during decades of peace and possessed neither the strength nor the training to draw the longbows that had gained victory at Agincourt and at Crécy; the magnates of the north still secretly nourished a fondness for medieval attitudes; and most serious of all, no one knew how many silent allies of the pope lurked in English homes. Possibly 300 of Cardinal William Allen's seminary priests still crept from their priest holes and cellars to strengthen the Catholic faithful in their determination and to perform the miracle of the Mass. Twenty thousand copies of the cardinal's inflammatory writings, assuring the flock that the day of liberation was near, were being read and circulated from one Catholic house to the next.

How many sympathetic readers there were was the crucial question. Cardinal Allen hopefully estimated that two-thirds of the population were, in their secret hearts, loyal to the Holy Church, and English exiles in Europe lived on a roseate dream of a rich and prosperous land where Catholic peasants would rise up at a signal from Rome or Madrid and deliver "Catholic friends and brethren from the damnable and intolerable yoke of heresy." Two-thirds, one-half, one-third, the number meant little on an island sustained by xenophobia and darkly suspicious of anyone who did not admire all things English. If even the small voice of conscience could speak louder than loyalty to crown and country, as it so often did in France, then, despite the government's efforts to round up leading Catholics and to root out with ax and rack the Jesuit spies and seminary priests, there was no real defense against the

danger of religious hysteria.

But Elizabeth thought otherwise. She was willing to gamble that her subjects were more English than popish and that in a showdown patriotism would prove stronger than faith. She was right, but at the time, no one could be certain, and the warriors who sailed to meet Philip's crusaders did so with the fear that their houses might at any time be burned down behind their backs.

The two fleets sighted one another for the first time off Dodman Point during the early evening of July 30, the English sails sparkling in the glare of the setting sun, and the Spanish galleons appearing like silhouettes in the fading light. The long haul from Corunna, where the Armada had refitted after leaving Lisbon, had been made in just under ten days. The weather was difficult, as it had been all that summer, and five Spanish ships - four unseaworthy galleys designed for Mediterranean waters and a 768-ton converted merchantman - had failed to reach the rendezvous off the Lizard. Though Medina Sidonia's fleet had already been reduced to 125 sails, Charles Howard, the English Lord Admiral, had nowhere near that number in readiness. A cautious queen, who did not trust her Dutch allies, had insisted that five galleons and thirty merchantmen and pinnaces under Lord Henry Seymour should patrol the approaches to Dunkirk and Níeuport lest Parma make a sudden dash in his barges for the English coast. Fourteen great galleons and possibly fifty other vessels under Vice Admiral Francis Drake were stationed at Plymouth, but only fifty-four English ships had been able to slip out against the wind to confront the Armada in open water; the rest of Howard's navy was victualing and arming in various Channel ports.

Given time, the Lord Admiral could collect a fleet of some 200 vessels, which he described as "the best ships in the world"; Hawkins's eighteen sleek gallons, weighing between 300 and 700 tons, seven smaller galleons, 150 merchantmen of varying sizes, and possibly thirty pinnaces and light frigates. It was these figures that determined for both sides the nature of the running fight up the Channel. Sidonia had orders not to engage such a formidable enemy unless conditions were favorable or the English forced a fight. Howard's design was to test his strength against the Spanish by a series of running broadsides and wait until he could marshal a numerically

superior fleet. Until the crucial battle off Gravelines, when the Lord Admiral's ships had been joined by Seymour's five galleons, the action from Eddystone up through the Channel to Calais was a noisy gun duel of swift English seadogs circling an infuriated Spanish bull.

The Armada was, indeed, a bull. It had rushed into the arena expecting to find matadors flourishing red capes and ceremonial swords, and picadors on heavily padded horses, and had imagined that it would engage an ancient and worthy enemy who fought according to the rules. It had anticipated a relatively fair fight in which men were often killed and occasionally, almost by divine dispensation, the bull was granted its life. On such terms, the Armada had been willing to fight and if need be to die. Instead, it encountered English galleons, armed with long-range guns, that refused to play the game and sought to kill without honor or mercy.

On the morning of July 31, Medina Sidonia was alarmed to discover that the English had gained the weather gauge during the night, having slipped out from Plymouth well to the lee of the Spaniards. Many naval historians consider this feat to have been the decisive maneuver of the week-long engagement, for thereafter Howard never really lost the advantage of position. The move may have been decisive, but it was no great feat; it was merely portentous evidence that Hawkins's newly designed vessels could tack well into the eye of the wind and achieve any position they chose. In answer to the English maneuver, the duke ordered his fleet to battle stations and placed his squadrons in a crescent formation, his strongest galleons clustered at the point of each horn, his troop carriers and clumsier merchantmen in the center. Then he unfurled and hoisted the sacred banner of the Armada. Stitched on one side were the imperial arms of Spain and the figure of the crucified Christ, on the other the image of the Madonna and the words: "Arise, oh Lord, and vindicate Thy cause." At a signal from the admiral's flagship, "every man in the fleet knelt down and prayed our Lord to give us victory over the enemies of His faith." Howard countered with a piece of chivalric nonsense, sending his sloop, the *Disdain*, to deliver his personal challenge to the duke. There was a fundamental difference, however, between the two gestures: for the Spanish it was the traditional way of fighting, secure in the guardianship of heaven; for the English it was mere heraldic posing before getting down to the serious matter of

sinking the enemy.

The Spanish, in their dangerously strong defensive crescent, expertly handled vessels named after the celestial host - the *San Marcos*, *San Mateo*, *San Felipe*, *San Juan*, *San Lorenzo*, *San Martin*, and *Nuestra Senora del Rosario*. They waited with confidence for the gaily colored enemy fleet - the red-painted *White Bear*, the black-and-white *Bonaventure*, the brown *Lion*, the green-and-white *Revenge* - to commence the attack. The English, however, had no intention of facing almost certain death by sailing between the deadly prongs of the crescent and engaging in a general melee of grappling and boarding. Instead, they approached, wheeled off, and, firing four shots to the enemy's one, raked the Armada with burst after burst of cannon shot. The entire encounter was nothing more than an extensive gunnery practice, neither side doing the other any harm, for Howard never came close enough either to risk the timber-splitting, Spanish thirty-pounders or to permit his own nine-pounders to penetrate the Spanish hulls.

Thoroughly frustrated, both sides gave up the fight, and Medina Sidonia proceeded majestically up the Channel, with Admiral Howard worrying the Spaniards from behind and adding ship after ship to his own fleet as both forces approached Calais. On the evidence of the first few days of battle, the English were increasingly alarmed that the Armada might meet Parma after all, and there seemed to be nothing they could do to prevent it. The Spanish, plagued by bad luck and unable to come to grips with a swift and nimble enemy, were equally concerned. One great ship, the forty-six-gun *Rosario*, carrying 55,000 gold ducats and 418 sailors and soldiers, fouled its neighbor, broke its own bowsprit, lost its foremast, and fell into the hands of the English. There is a legend that another ship blew up when a Spanish captain caned a master gunner for insubordination, and the gunner, in a rage, thrust a flaming linstock into the stern powder magazine and then leaped through a porthole into the ocean. The story made good copy everywhere and grew with each telling, but it is probably grounded on nothing more substantial than the fact that there was an explosion on another ship, the *San Salvador*, which, like the *Rosario*, fell into the hands of the English squadrons.

Between Eddystone and Calais, the unsatisfactory and

indecisive battle of July 31 was repeated three times over. Throughout the week, the Spaniards' discipline and morale remained as impressive as ever, even if their supply of cannonballs was running desperately low and they had inflicted no damage on the enemy. The English were still unable to stop the Armada, and their cannonading continued to bounce harmlessly off the thick sides of the Spanish men-of-war. If the laurels of victory had been handed out on August 6, the decision might have been given to Medina Sidonia, who had brought his fleet, as instructed, safely to anchor off the Calais Roads to wait for a chance to rendezvous with Parma, encamped thirty miles away at Dunkirk. Reports of Spanish successes were already spreading in every capital of Europe; they were followed by embellished and detailed stories of Drake being captured while trying to board the *San Martin* and of the English fleet sunk or fleeing in panic for shelter. Mendoza, who could scarcely restrain his eagerness for news, was sufficiently convinced by the early rumors to order kindling for a huge victory bonfire in the courtyard of his Paris residence. Had he known the truth that was slowly being borne upon Medina Sidonia, he might have hesitated to spend his money; on the day the ambassador ordered his wood, the balance of war shifted decisively and disastrously against the Spanish fleet.

On Sunday morning, August 7, Medina Sidonia was told by couriers from Parma that the Great Enterprise was hopeless and the fleet doomed. Parma's troops and barges were bottled up at Dunkirk, where the harbor was too shallow to receive the duke's heavy galleons, and the Armada, its stores spoiling, its ammunition expended, and its water barrels leaking, had passed the point of no return. The wind and a superior English fleet prevented any chance of retreat through the Channel, and ahead lay the treacherous and uninviting waters of the North Sea. Whether the thousands of doomed men on board realized the terrible truth is doubtful, for their courage remained high, and they continued to have confidence in divine intervention. Not even faith, however, could withstand the unnerving sight of eight blazing fire ships driving down on the fleet during the early hours of August 8.

The possibility that the enemy might resort to fire to dislodge the Armada from its anchorage was only to be expected. Fire at sea was the gravest menace faced by men and ships, and Medina Sidonia had ordered every galleon to mark well its

anchor and be ready to slip, but not cut, its cable, in order to side-step the fire ships if they should penetrate the ring of pinnaces stationed to intercept them and tow them harmlessly to shore. What the duke was unable to guard against was hysteria in his own ranks. To the dread of fire at sea was added a fearful rumor: The English had hired Federigo Giambelli, the satanic Italian inventor of the hell-burner. These infernal monsters had floated down on Parma's bridges and waterworks during the siege of Antwerp, had blown to smithereens hundreds of men and months of bloody effort, and had almost saved the city. What the Spanish ships saw drifting toward them on the early morning tide were not Giambelli's floating bombs but something just as awesome - eight small frigates, their rigging and tarred decks afire and their cannons spiked and primed to explode and add molten metal and flaming debris to the floating inferno. The pinnaces were unable to intercept all of these deadly vessels, "spurting fire and their artillery shooting" and sounding like Giambelli's hellburners, and Spanish nerve, strained by sleepless nights and exhausting days of inconclusive fighting, finally snapped. Against orders, most of the captains cut their cables and ran for it. The Armada was no longer a fighting machine, but a formless throng of ships headed for certain destruction at the hands of the English or on the sandy shoals of the Flemish coast. Next morning, only five ships remained in position, having obeyed Medina Sidonia's orders to slip cable and return to their anchorage. The rest were scattered up and down the coast, and one of the cumbersome giant galleasses, rudderless, had run aground. It was lying helpless on the sandbar off Calais harbor.

The decision to panic the Spanish fleet from its berth was a reflection of the swelling confidence within the English fleet. For a week, captains and seamen had been testing their galleons and new naval tactics against an enemy that remained medieval and Mediterranean in its military thinking. What they had learned was both heartening and alarming. Ship for ship Howard's galleons were better manned, better gunned, and better constructed than the Spanish ones, but it was also apparent that English nine-pound culverins could do Medina Sidonia's heavy battleships no real harm unless Howard was willing to close the range and risk Spanish heavy artillery. This the Lord Admiral was now prepared to do, for Seymour's squadron had joined him the previous evening,

and at last he had a decided numerical superiority. At daybreak on August 8, English trumpets called the queen's fleet to action.

Somehow, despite the treacherous sands of the Dunkirk bar and the English sea wolves at his heels, Medina Sidonia got his fleet back into its familiar crescent formation, but it was a sorry shadow of the Armada that had sailed from Corunna. Pinnaces, freighters, and a number of smaller merchantmen were still scattered up and down the coast, but twenty-five of the most powerful galleons and galleasses had recovered from the panic of the night before and answered the admiral's call to battle stations. The odds were not as desperate as they appeared, for the English had no more than twenty-five men-of-war capable of handling the hard fighting core of the Spanish fleet. All day the battle raged. Drake's ships swept in close but never quite close enough for the Spanish to grapple and board them. The English delivered terrible broadsides and then veered off, to wheel about and let fly another salvo or to move on to the next enemy galleon.

For the first time, the decks of the Spanish warships ran red with blood and even from a distance the English could see the gore dripping from scuppers and cannon hatches. With the four-foot oak walls and the lighter superstructures being smashed by English broadsides, men died as often from flying splinters as they did from gun and musket shot. Spanish gallantry was magnificent, but as cannon after cannon was hit or ran out of shot, there was little left with which to fight. The *San Mateo*, with half its company dead and scarcely able to stay afloat, invited tormentors to stand to and fight like men, and when an English officer, judging the ship's condition to be hopeless, climbed the rigging of his own warship and offered terms of honorable surrender, he received a musket ball for an answer. As the English galleon backed away, the Spanish crew jeered at the heretics for being cowardly hens who dared not board and fight man to man.

In every action of the battle, the story was the same - a magnificent Spanish fleet that begged to be allowed at least to die honorably. Time and again the crescent formation was broken only to be reformed, and when the last cannon was fired, and the battle was over, Howard was still unaware of how desperate was Medina Sidonia's plight. The enemy, he reported, "consisteth of mighty ships and great strength," and

all he had been able to do was "pluck their feathers little and little." Howard was depressed; a sudden rainstorm and his own shortage of food and ammunition had allowed the enemy to escape. Actually, however, the Spanish were mortally stricken, and Drake judged correctly that Parma and Medina Sidonia would never shake hands and that neither of them would "greatly rejoice at this day's service."

Medina Sidonia, indeed, had no cause to rejoice; his condition next morning turned out to be even worse than he had imagined. Not only had he been beaten in open battle off Gravelines and saved from total destruction only by a chance squall, but during the night, three of his finest warships had been lost, one sunk and the others run aground to save themselves from sinking. More serious than leaking hulls and broken rigging was the wind that was driving the entire fleet to certain destruction on the shallow sandbars off Flushing. Then, about noon, the miracle for which nearly 30,000 men had so fervently prayed was delivered. As the leadsmen called out the depth, and sailors could almost feel the sand under their ships' keels, the wind suddenly boxed the compass and steadied at a point that allowed the Armada to slip past the Dutch coast in safety and sail on into the gray-green waters of the North Sea.

It might have been more merciful had God withheld his miracle and let the stricken monster die swiftly upon the sands of Zeeland. At least sailors and soldiers would have been spared a slow and agonizing death from cold and starvation, or the futile hours spent manning pumps and climbing rigging that ended only in catastrophe on the cliffs of Scotland and the heavy surf of the Irish coast. There was no question of returning to fight again, though the duke and all his captains vowed that they would stand and do battle if only the wind would shift. As it was, they had no choice but to be swept into the North Sea with Howard at their heels, and to endure the 2,500-mile ordeal that would eventually bring only a few of them back home to Spain.

When Medina Sidonia was finally able to take stock, he found that the Armada was in greater peril of dying of thirst than of being destroyed by the English, who trailed behind at a respectful distance. The duke did the best he could for his exhausted, demoralized men. Horses and mules were cast overboard to save water, and every officer and man was

reduced to a ration of a pint of water and half a pint of wine a day. In a desperate effort to restore discipline, twenty captains who had disobeyed the duke's orders during the disastrous battle off Gravelines were court-martialed and sentenced to hang.

Howard gave up the chase on August 12. Had he stayed on another two days he would have been better able to guess the ultimate fate of the enemy, for on August 14, three Italian merchantmen dropped behind and vanished into the cold expanse of the North Sea. Each day, as the fleet ran northward before the wind, toward a point where it could turn west around the Orkney Islands, the Armada grew smaller as the slower and clumsier vessels dropped away into the fog. Each morning, there was the sad ceremony of throwing the dead overboard, and by August 21, 3,000 men were mortally ill. For two more weeks, the battered galleons made no progress at all in their desperate efforts to tack against a perverse wind. Doggedly they tried to inch westward, far enough to avoid being swept by giant Atlantic rollers onto boiling surf and the sheer cliffs of the Blasket Islands off the Irish coast. Vessel after vessel was flung upon rock and sand to be pounded to pieces by tides and waves. Their crews drowned, and at Sligo, on a five-mile stretch of beach, Sir Geoffrey Fenton reported "1,100 dead bodies of men, which the sea had driven upon the shore."

So many lurid tales have been written about the savage doings on the Irish coast that it is impossible to say what really happened. Possibly it was true that as one of the immense Spanish galleons broke up on the rocks of the Blasket Islands a maddened nobleman struck down the pilot, screaming that he had wrecked the ship by treason and that of all the gentlemen and sailors on board only the pilot's son, who had lashed himself to a spar, survived. Possibly also, officers and noblemen, if they escaped drowning, were killed by Irish peasants for their finery, and possibly the Prince of Ascoli, Philip's illegitimate son, was murdered for his silk stockings, satin doublet, and gold lace. It would probably be closer to the truth, however, to say that both aristocrats and commoners were butchered by order of Sir William Fitzwilliam, Elizabeth's lord deputy of Ireland.

More ships survived the agony than could humanly have been expected to: The amazing strength that allowed Medina

Sidonia and his bleeding crews to bring home a limping squadron of some sixty-six sails bordered on the miraculous. Even this was a useless and tragic feat; half of the vessels never sailed again, and perhaps two-thirds of the men, still alive when the duke sighted Spain, died of disease, dysentery, and hunger within the month. One crew arrived home so sick and exhausted that it was unable even to lower sail and drop anchor, and ran its ship aground in the safety of Santander harbor.

In all, ten men-of-war had been lost: two captured by accident, three stranded on the Flemish and Calais beaches, and five sunk by the guns of the English. Another eleven, and possibly a dozen freighters were demolished on the long flight home, partly because the winds and the immense surge of the Atlantic cast them on the jagged rocks of the Irish coast, but mostly because men dying of privation and exhaustion could not man their sodden, leaking ships. Twenty smaller vessels remain unaccounted for. Some authorities say they were "lost, fate unknown"; others claim that most of them eventually found their way back to Spain.

By the time the jubilant word of what had happened to Philip's vessels off the Irish coast had made its way to England, the supreme moment of Elizabeth's reign had passed and the long recessional had begun. When the Armada first approached the Lizard on July 29, and Captain Thomas Fleming of the pinnace *Golden Hind* rushed to report the news, interrupting Drake's immortal game of bowls on Plymouth Hoe, legend maintains that the old buccaneer dismissed him with the flamboyant statement: "We have time enough to finish the game and beat the Spaniards too." Whatever Drake may have actually said or felt, most Englishmen were less insensate about the approaching ordeal. Certainly by the time the game of bowls was finished, the chain of beacons had been lit, and within hours, London and even distant York knew that the crisis was finally upon them.

No one could be sure that England's naval wall, however much it had been blessed by a Protestant deity, would be able to hold back the Catholic onslaught. Highly exaggerated reports trickling in from the Netherlands had it that Parma's legions were only awaiting Medina Sidonia's galleons and a favorable tide to commence the invasion of the island. The

queen could not hope to muster an army to match Castilian pikemen and musketeers seasoned by years of hard fighting in and around Antwerp, but could only counter a mercenary Spanish army with the theory of a nation in arms. The responsibility of Elizabeth's subjects, from sixteen to sixty, to maintain themselves in fighting trim was built into English history, reaching even further back than Harold's ill-trained shire levies that broke and fled at the battle of Hastings. But an ancient and rusty obligation had now become a pressing patriotic duty. For centuries hired bands of semi-feudal retainers had been sent to fight on the Continent, but for the first time in over 300 years the realm faced a serious threat of invasion. A creaky and decayed feudal system still worked to some degree, and members of the nobility rushed to offer their queen troops raised from among their own retainers and paid from their own purses. Lord Morley, though his estates were diminished, raised a company numbering 120 horse and foot soldiers; Lord Dacre, despite the demands of his many creditors, did almost as well; and the wealthy Earl of Pembroke attended upon the sovereign with 300 cavalry and 500 infantrymen.

The backbone of the queen's defenses, however, was no longer an antiquated feudal machine but a system of national musters, whereby the Tudor government endeavored to keep in military readiness at least a part of the kingdom's manpower. In March 1573, a royal commission had taken a muster of all the shires and had found them woefully unprepared. Derbyshire reported it could provide 4,000 men but could afford to train only 500 in musketry and bowmanship. Other counties announced that they were too poor to organize any kind of militia. The same excuses, prevarications, and incompetence were again in evidence in 1577, and almost every shire claimed that the 320 pounds needed to train a company of 400 men was too great a load for their taxpayers to carry.

Fortunately, by the year 1588, the Privy Council had managed to whip the muster into reasonable shape, and the counties opened their pocketbooks as the emergency grew near. Essex reported a potential of 13,062 infantry and 300 horses, and promised almost 4,000 men fully armed with musket, shot, and pike. In shire after shire, the gentry, bullied and encouraged by the Privy Council, had taken over local defense. Despite feuds, confusion, and shortage of

money, they had organized, at least on paper, an impressive national levy capable of putting into the field an army of 100,000 men. In actual fact, it was quite impossible to feed, arm, and discipline such a force, and older hands grumbled that almost every recruit was "rawly furnished, some lacking a headpiece, some a sword," and what equipment was available was "evil, unfit, or unbecoming." In July 1588, the best the Earl of Leicester, captain general of Her Majesty's forces, could collect and feed at his camp at Tilbury was an army of around 10,000. He complained bitterly when 4,000 men from Essex arrived without a barrel of beer or a loaf of bread among the lot, and he sourly announced that he was more "cook, caterer, and huntsman" than a captain general.

Whatever their fighting deficiencies may have been, Leicester's brave lads made a magnificent audience for the most dramatic moment of Gloriana's reign. On August 18, ten days after the Armada had fled northward before Howard's fleet, the queen determined to inspect her loyal troops, gathered in full war regalia, at Tilbury. She arrived with great white plumes in her hair and confidence in her heart, for the news from Howard, who had given up the chase near Scottish waters, was increasingly hopeful. It is true that Puritan Francis Walsingham complained about the "half-doing" that had bred "dishonor and leaves the disease uncured," but with the Armada limping home, almost destroyed, and not a single English ship lost, the disease for the moment did not seem so dreadful. The queen was always satisfied with half-doings; in fact, she preferred them, and she was now ready to receive the accolades of her jubilant subjects and stout defenders. She spoke to throngs who were still dazzled by the famous red hair (now a wig), the ruddy and healthy complexion (now liberally helped by rouge pot and rice powder), and the "princely resolution" (made more majestic by a white velvet gown and more resolute by a silver breastplate). Gloriana carried her fifty-five years well and could still marshal words and command emotions that not even the dead hand of history can deprive of their splendor: "My loving people, we have been persuaded by some that are careful for our safety, to take heed how we commit ourselves to armed multitudes, for fear of treachery. But I assure you, I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people. Let tyrants fear. I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts

and good will of my subjects; and therefore I am come amongst you as you see, at this time, not for my recreation and disport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live or die amongst you all, and to lay down for my God and for my kingdom and for my people, my honor and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a King of England too and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm; to which, rather than any dishonor shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field. I know already for your forwardness you deserve rewards and crowns; and we do assure you, in the word of a prince, they shall be duly paid you."

Though the queen was as good as her word and paid her soldiers to the last farthing - which was more than Philip did for his crews when they crept home to Spain - her loving people felt that somehow they had been deprived of their full quota of deserved "rewards and crowns." The romance of war had a sour ending, for the news of the Armada's fate was delayed, mercifully for Philip and infuriatingly for Elizabeth, who wanted above all else to decommission her fleet, dismiss her soldiers, and save her exchequer. Howard returned home triumphant, but men talked of might-have-beens, not of laurels won. They did not know that wind, rock, and water on the Irish coast were giving them a far greater victory than English guns could ever have hoped to achieve. The watch still had to be kept, for the war, so gloriously begun, first with the rape of Cadiz and then with the defeat of the Armada, did not end, but deteriorated into a costly and endless struggle in Holland, France, and Ireland. On the high seas, Philip profited from defeat and learned how to defend his ports and treasure fleets. In Ireland, an English ulcer fostered by Spanish gold, consumed the queen's carefully hoarded revenues, loaded her government with debt, and destroyed a host of military reputations. Elizabethans had every right to feel that the Spanish beard had only been singed and that Philip's fighting strength and determination remained almost as great as ever.

It was a full generation after the defeat of the Invincible Armada that elderly Elizabethans scornful of a Stuart king

who feared his own shadow, driveled at the mouth, picked his nose, and closeted himself with pretty young men - began to look back upon the great days of '88 through a golden haze of nostalgia and to see an event of decisive and heroic proportions. Even today, from the comfort of our armchairs, it is difficult to evaluate an enterprise that could have ended only as it did - in catastrophe. The boast that Elizabeth's sea dogs, strong in their knowledge of a God who was aggressively English, saved northern Europe for Protestantism, guaranteed the independence of Holland, secured France for the Bourbon dynasty, and made England safe for the great age of Elizabethan literature rings hollow.

Shakespeare never made direct reference to the English triumph. From the start, Parma questioned whether the conquest of England was necessary to the destruction of Holland and Zeeland and urged Philip to direct all of his efforts against Dutch deep-water ports and ocean shipping. Only after bringing the Dutch to heel might Spain have chanced the invasion of an island protected by the finest navy in the world. In France, it is difficult to imagine the course of history being different had God wrought a miracle, bemusing English wits and destroying Dutch flyboats so that Parma and Medina Sidonia could meet and cross the Channel to England. Even had Henry III never dared to order the death of the Duke of Guise or had escaped the assassin's blade, Henry of Navarre still remained the rightful heir to the throne. Besides, after more than thirty years of religious and feudal bloodshed, the demand for peace, grounded firmly on history and legality, could not have been long denied.

Yet when the analysts have finished their work, there remains something to be said for a victory that has become the touchstone of Protestant mythology, for the destruction of the Armada was an immensely significant event in the transition of Europe into the modern age. The medieval profile, with its longing for unity, orthodoxy, and theology, was smashed beyond recognition by the galleons and culverins of Howard's fleet. In England, love of that blessed isle allowed no place for loyalty to a European commonwealth, and as the Armada disappeared into the mist of the North Sea, so also did the memory of the seamless medieval cloak of Christendom. Even in the English Jesuit college at Rome it was reported that English students cheered at the defeat of an armada that had never lost its Spanish flavor, though it sought to represent all

Christendom and defend a medieval dream.

On board the ships of the Armada, history had also been made. Of valor there was an abundance, but in the final reckoning, even courage became the senseless, arrogant histrionics of men and captains whom time and technology - and, it would seem, God as well - had passed by. Militarily and spiritually, the Armada belonged to the feudal, crusading past. Years earlier, King Philip's father had discovered that fortune was a woman who loved not old men, and now the son learned that she was no lover of old-fashioned ways.

As the capitals of Europe learned the full magnitude of the disaster, king, pope, and general grieved, each according to his nature. In Rome, Sixtus V congratulated himself that he had not after all lent the King of Spain 1 million gold ducats. In Brussels, Parma went straight to the most tragic aspect of the calamity: "What adds," he said, "more than I can here express to my grief at this disaster is that it was humanly impossible to remedy it, or aid in any way." In Madrid, Philip wrapped himself in the mantle of his faith and, true to his character, returned to work. "In God's actions," he said, "reputation is neither lost nor gained: it is best not to talk of it." Philip may have been right, yet even Sixtus V could not refrain from exclaiming upon the wonders of Elizabeth and the fearless Drake, who together had tweaked the nose of the Spanish colossus. In London, the fanfare for Elizabeth was even less restrained, and heroic Englishmen "did nothing but talk of what a great queen she was and how they would die for her."

The queen had reached the autumn of her life by the year of the Armada and was content to sit by the fire and remember the soft, fresh face of Leicester and the great deeds of her beardless boys, but her realm was in a more daring and jubilant frame of mind. The decade of heroes had begun, and men of more than mortal stature pranced and quarreled around their goddess-queen. Gloriana was doubtless flattered that her titans were willing to go anywhere and try anything for queen and country, but she found them, as often as not, mischievous and irresponsible as a pack of schoolboys. The Olympian posing of Raleigh, Essex, and Drake may have added magnificence to her middle age and luster to the noble achievements of her reign, but their juvenile antics drove Elizabeth to distraction and were far better suited to the

realm of poetry than they were to the serious business of war and politics.

IX

A DECADE OF HEROES

It is only proper to introduce a tale of heroes with traditional words: Once upon a time there lived a generation of men so exaggerated in their behavior and so flamboyant in their aspirations that not even the fearsome words of Marlowe's Faustus could describe the fiery zeal that consumed them.

> Philosophy is odious and obscure;
>
> Both law and physic are for petty wits;
>
> Divinity is basest of the three . . .
>
> 'Tis magic, magic, that hath ravish'd me.

The magic that ravished them did not come, as did Faustus's, from a bargain with the devil; it lay within them in the boundless self-confidence that led Raleigh to assert that "style is the man," and the playwright George Peele to shout: "King of a molehill had I rather be than the richest subject of a monarchy." One and all - Raleigh, Essex, Frobisher, Drake, Norris, Sidney, Grenville - were willing to "pay nature's debt with cheerful countenance," for they courted death and never feared it. The dynamism that urged them on was devoid of heavenly reward or hellish punishment. They asked of God only the chance to show their true mettle, forged in the fire of their egotism. The adventure of life, said Raleigh to his son, was "a troublesome bark," and it was up to each man to make good his "station in the upper deck; those that live under hatches are ordained to be drudges and slaves."

Whatever may be said against these heroes of Elizabethan England, they cannot be accused of dullness or slavishness. They spoke proudly and persistently of their duty to God and queen, but Elizabeth knew that neither the threat of prison nor the fear of hell could discipline her warriors, and in letter after letter, she was reduced to impotent rage and pleading. She was infuriated by Dudley's expensive and useless prancing about Holland and his peevish insistence on being styled governor general, and she angrily announced that she was "utterly at squares with this childish dealing." After Drake had embarked on the haphazard expedition of 1589, Elizabeth sought to prevent disobedience by warning him to beware lest vainglory "obfuscate the eyes of your judgment." The advice went unheeded, for, as the queen suspected, Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Norris "went to places more for

profit than for service." They evaded their sovereign's orders to strike at warships and naval installations in northern Spain, and instead went looking for honor and plunder in an abortive attack on Lisbon. Elizabeth was particularly irritated with the entire venture since her favorite young courtier, the Earl of Essex, had rushed to join the fray, announcing: "If I speed well, I will adventure to be rich; if not, I will not live to see the end of my poverty." Gloriana ordered her errant boy back to court and grimly reminded Drake and Norris: "As we have authority to rule, so we look to be obeyed."

Elizabeth might have spared herself the cost of the ink; she had endless authority, but when glory and gold were concerned, she was rarely obeyed. To honor, her courtiers were willing slaves; to the standards of Tudor society and the wishes of their queen, they were often lighthearted rebels. Duty to themselves as a breed of men apart was the root and branch of their faith, and almost in anguish Essex cried out: "I am tied by my own reputation to use no tergiversation!"

Heroes, like saints, become grotesque caricatures when held up to the mirror of humanity. What is the normal man to think of the extraordinary behavior of Sir Richard Grenville during the last encounter of the *Revenge*? The occasion was one of the less glorious of Elizabeth's efforts to finance naval warfare with the profits of piracy. A small English fleet under Lord Thomas Howard - six galleons and a few auxiliary vessels bent on plundering the Spanish treasure fleet - was caught in 1591 by some fifty-five Spanish ships, including twenty of Philip's galleons of the Indian guard. Howard had been hovering off the Azores for months in fruitless expectation of the treasure flota, and had just begun filling his water kegs and resting his crew at Flores when the Spaniards swept in from the east and surprised the English at anchor. The admiral ordered his ships to run for it, and he managed to get five of his vessels away to safety. Sir Richard Grenville in the *Revenge*, however, preferred to take on the enemy fleet single-handed and smash his way through to the open sea. It remains a mystery whether Grenville's action was sheer bravado touched with madness, in which he regarded the war with Spain as a personal conflict between himself and Philip's empire, or a suicidal endeavor to save his comrades in arms by covering Lord Thomas Howard's retreat.

Whatever the truth, his defiance of the naval might of Spain

has become one of the legendary feats of English history. For fifteen hours, the *Revenge*, with only 100 of its crew fit to fight, endured an agony of cannonading and musket fire that could end only in total destruction. Attacked by fifteen galleons in succession, at least one of which was three times the tonnage of the *Revenge*, Grenville fought until his ship was a slaughter house, running red with blood, riddled by 800 cannonballs, its mast and rigging shot away, and almost every man dead or wounded. Finally, with no further chance of victory, he ordered the master gunner to blow up the *Revenge* with all aboard so that "nothing might remain of glory or victory to the Spaniards." Self-immolation may be a suitable death for heroes, but the crew, of a more pedestrian reasoning and more mortal clay, thought otherwise and insisted upon surrender. The Spanish presented amazing terms: Common seamen would not be sent to row in the galleys but were promised safe passage to England, and officers would be kept in honorable captivity awaiting ransom. Grenville would accept no such terms. Although he was desperately wounded, there was still fight left in the old sea dog. His scorn was boundless; the Revenge had already sunk two Spanish galleons, and "the Spaniards," he said, "should never glory to have taken one ship of Her Majesty's." He had to be forcibly restrained from falling on his sword to escape capture. But finally, he was overruled by his crew. The Spanish took him aboard and treated him with the respect due to the devil himself.

They did their best to save his life, but Grenville had no intention of living on in captivity or dying of his wounds. If we can believe the legend that surrounds the event - and it is unbelievable in any man but Grenville - he deliberately crushed his wine goblet at the first opportunity he had, and while his horrified hosts watched, methodically chewed up the pieces of glass. His last words were true to character: "Here die I, Richard Grenville, with a joyful and quiet mind, for that I have ended my life as a true soldier ought to do that hath fought for his country, queen, religion, and honor." When, a few days later, a hurricane swept down on both the flota and Philip's galleons and sank more than seventy ships, including the hulk of the *Revenge*, the Spanish understandably thought that Grenville had been in league with the devil and had called upon the elements to avenge his death.

The same aura of wild fantasy surrounds the death of that

literate Puritan and courtier-cum-adventurer Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who was lost at sea in 1583 on his return from an ill-starred effort to explore and colonize the coast of Newfoundland. Economic ruin faced Gilbert, for he had invested every penny he had in his vision of populating a new world. Yet his self-confidence never wavered. "Be of good cheer," he assured his men when they urged him to return to England, for God had given him special knowledge of the "inestimable good" to be achieved from the expedition and would help persuade the queen to lend him 10,000 pounds for further discoveries in distant lands. But Elizabeth had already noted that Sir Humphrey was a particularly unlucky commander, and this last voyage, when more than 100 colonists were lost in a wreck on the uncharted coast of Nova Scotia, again proved her judgment correct.

When the little flotilla, sadly reduced to two ships but still confident of God's favor, sailed home, Sir Humphrey transferred his flag from the forty-ton bark, the *Golden Hind*, to the much smaller *Squirrel*, in part out of a sense of duty, but in part because he feared that men might say he was afraid of the sea. Even his admirers thought this gesture excessively rash and wondered that he should "prefer the wind of a vain report to the weight of his own life." Heroes, however, must live up to their reputations. The last that was ever seen or heard of the foolhardy commander was that he was sitting in the stern of his cockleshell craft, with a book in his hand, assuring his crew that they were "as near to heaven by sea as by land." Hours later, during a wild September storm, the *Squirrel* "was devoured and swallowed up of the sea."

It is easy to dismiss as mere madness the actions of heroes who behaved like a band of overgrown juvenile delinquents more suited for a house of correction than a hall of fame. Yet to do so is to miss the full flavor and true character of the age. Not only did Gilbert, Grenville, Essex, and the rest take themselves and their reputations seriously but so also did the world in which they lived. Representations of Drake's ruddy and belligerent features and tublike form hung in the portrait galleries of dozens of Protestant princes throughout Germany and Holland; the daredevil death of the thirty-two- year-old Sir Philip Sidney, who rode into battle without his steel cuisses because his commander was not wearing armor, was held up as an act of heroism becoming to a great poet; and

Marlowe spoke for his generation when he wrote of the dreadful Tamburlaine that his honor consisted "in shedding blood."

The heroes of the sixteenth century were no deities fulfilling their boisterous destinies in Olympian isolation. Men like Grenville and Gilbert were not exceptions to the Tudor rule; they were simply magnified examples of it. Individually their actions are grotesque, but placed within the context of an age when exaggeration and violence were the central characteristics of life, their feats appear little more extraordinary than the actions of such lesser-known contemporaries as the indefatigable Robert Carey, who won a 2,000-pound bet by walking from London to Berwick in twelve days, or the nameless English soldier whose arm was torn off by a cannonball at the siege of Ostend. Undaunted, the young man picked up the severed limb, returned with it to camp, and announced to his comrades: "Behold the arm which but at dinner helped its fellow." The sixteenth century believed, as did the eighteenth, in "bottom," that all but undefinable trait that unites stoicism with enthusiasm, histrionics with conviction, and foppery with toughness.

Violence, cruelty, and intensity were commonplaces of Tudor life. The endurance of Drake's tiny band that circumnavigated the globe in an epic voyage lasting three years must be set off against the discomforts and risks of normal existence - skin diseases, lice, fleas, toothaches, gout, stones, rheumatism, bloodletting, smallpox, sweating sickness, and the plague. Only the strong of body and stout of heart survived, and even they were hard put to withstand medical practices that were often more a test of the patient's fortitude than a cure for his sickness. The surgeon's saw without ether, the barber's tooth extractor without novocain, and the physician's potions without understanding were no less terrible than Spanish musket and cannon shot. The death of Don John, Philip's half- brother, from a horrible combination of syphilis and some variety of the plague, was just as frightful as that of Sir Richard Grenville. The suffering of poor Lady Throckmorton at the hands of Doctor Atslow must have been comparable to that of the wretches on the *Revenge*. Lady Throckmorton had been hemorrhaging after the birth of a daughter, and Sir Arthur Throckmorton noted in his diary the treatment, with full clinical details. His good lady was wrapped in sheets soaked "in plantain water and vinegar of

roses in equal quantities"; she was kept from all motion and both her arms were "tied very hard and sometimes loosed and tied again"; she was bled from both arms at frequent intervals for two or three days; and she was forced to "sit from her buttocks up to her navel in a deep bowl of cold water." Lady Throckmorton survived her cure, and Doctor Atslow was later imprisoned for treason and tortured on the rack - a mild punishment for what he prescribed for his unfortunate patients.

Men wore a tough hide of inhumanity and callousness that inured them to the sight of blind beggars trying to club a pig to death, or to the agonies of the condemned poisoner writhing in a pot of boiling oil, or the witch suffering on the stake, or the traitor strung up on the gallows and then, still living, cut down, castrated, and disemboweled. That good Christian gentleman, Master Phillip Stubbes, thought death not too great a penalty for swearing. If such a punishment, he conceded, were judged too severe, then he wished that offenders "might have a piece of their tongue cut off or lose some joint," and if that still seemed too extreme, at the least, blasphemers should "be seared in the forehead or cheek with a hot iron [and] engraven with some pretty posy, that they might be known and avoided."

Every city and court of Europe was exposed to brawling, dueling, and histrionics. Raleigh delighted in the magnificence of his famous cloaks and his reputation for "perpetually differing"; George Clifford, the Earl of Cumberland, always wore in his hat a glove dropped one day by Elizabeth; Sidney, as he lay dying, gravely presented his cup of water to a common soldier with the words: "Thy necessity is yet greater than mine"; and Essex, sent to France at the head of an army to aid Henry IV against the Spaniards, arrived resplendent in orange velvet embroidered with gold and sprinkled with jewels, and with an entourage dressed in the same livery. As Raleigh said, it was style that made the man. Even in their personal lives, the heroes of Tudor England lived by standards more suited to Valhalla than to the banquet hall. The story is told of how Raleigh and his son coined a bon mot by staging a family row at a dinner party. From the start, Sir Walter was doubtful about his son's table manners, but the young man had promised to "behave himself mighty mannerly." The two Raleighs sat next to each other, and halfway through the dinner young Wat suddenly remarked to

the company: "I, this morning, not having the fear of God before my eyes but by the instigation of the devil, went to a whore. I was very eager of her, kissed and embraced her, and went to enjoy her; but she thrust me from her and vowed I should not, 'For your father lay with me but an hour ago.'" Sir Walter was understandably outraged by his quarrelsome offspring's words and struck him "a damned blow over the face." In deference to his father, young Raleigh did not hit back but turned instead to his unsuspecting neighbor and struck the astonished gentleman, saying: "Box about: 'twill come to my father anon." "Box about" became a common saying in the seventeenth century.

Vainglorious buccaneers and gilded youths with "fierce dragons' spleens," wearing a lord's revenue on their backs, must have been irritating beyond measure to the merchant immersed in his accounts, to the bureaucrat insensate to romance, and to a queen who counted her change and constantly inquired into the cost of glory. Most Englishmen, however, forgave them their idiocies because they were great. Man's fate on earth was boredom, pain, and death, and men welcomed the chance to enjoy life vicariously. They thrilled at Raleigh's boast that England could make the kings of Spain "kings of figs and oranges, as in old times," or at his bragging that one English warship could match forty Dutch, for such words lent verisimilitude to their dreams.

The cult of the individual was part of the European heritage. Although Renaissance emphasis on the worth of man may have given new brilliance to the actions of mankind, the medieval world also had thought in terms of the individual. Feudal society had always been willing to make allowances for the uncommon man. Saints had traditionally been a breed apart; their folly had been judged by standards applicable only to themselves and had been found to be a higher wisdom. By the same token, heroes and geniuses in the sixteenth century were not judged as normal men were. Elizabeth forgave Essex for a degree of childishness and insolence that would have been ridiculed and punished in lesser men, and Pope Paul III thought it not unreasonable to excuse the boasted murders of Cellini because, as he said: "Men unique in their professions, like Benvenuto, were not subject to the laws." Those proud, undisciplined, and extravagant conquistadors, who carved out an empire for Spain, lived by a code unique to themselves. Cortes

persuaded his men on the beaches of Veracruz to burn their boats, cutting off their only means of escape, because, he said, such an act would be comparable to the "brave deeds done by heroes among the Romans." Bernal Diaz boasted that he had won nobility by fighting in twice as many battles as Caesar, and his claim was accepted by his contemporaries.

History, as the humble man knows, is reserved for the titans, those extraordinary men and women who achieve immortality by impressing their feats upon the memory of mankind; the rest of us must make do with heaven. But even among the Olympian host the historian must choose, and the remaining pages of the chapter are reserved for the adventures of but two Elizabethan heroes: Sir Walter Raleigh and Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex.

Raleigh was "fortune's tennis ball," a knavish, witty, boisterous fellow, proud as the devil and impudent as Puck, who longed "to be able to sway all men's fancies, all men's courses," and who was hated above all others "in court, city, and country." Only Elizabeth could handle him, and she was among the few who seems to have liked this "tall, handsome, and bold man" who suddenly appeared at her court in the early months of 1582. The queen was willing to listen to his ready and persuasive tongue, but she never gave him a chance to "sway all men's fancies." She would dress Raleigh's shapely limbs in the orange uniform of the captain of her guard, but the door of the Privy Council remained closed to him.

Exactly how Raleigh came to Gloriana's attention is a mystery. He was born around 1552 and stemmed from an old and respected Devonshire family. Neither his carriage nor the company he kept endeared him to men in authority, for young Walter's insolent conviction of his own genius was matched only by the impudent rowdiness of his associates. His servants brawled with the London watch; Raleigh himself was twice jailed in 1580 for disturbing the peace, and he won a measure of renown for silencing a noisy tavern bully by filling the fellow's mouth with wax and tying his beard to his mustache. Despite his skirmishes with the law, he received a captaincy and the command of 100 foot soldiers in 1580, and went forth to more glorious and bloody encounters against the nettlesome Irish rebels.

In Ireland, Raleigh won notoriety by the violence and ruthlessness of his methods of waging war, and he seems to have spent considerable time and energy criticizing his superiors, writing over their heads to the Council in London, and earning the dislike of the queen's lord deputy of Ireland. By spring 1582, he was back in England, and it was only then that he was introduced to the queen, perhaps through the favor of his half- brother, Sir Humphrey Gilbert. If, as legend reports, Raleigh did spend his last farthing on a cape of wondrous grandeur, which he extravagantly sacrificed to keep Elizabeth dry-shod, the investment paid off handsomely, for by May 1583, he had been granted the lucrative monopoly of licenses to sell wine. This eventually netted him the princely sum of £1,200 a year and permitted him to wear shoes reportedly worth 6,600 gold pieces.

Though real power as a statesman continued to elude Raleigh, he was granted other lucrative monopolies: land and houses in England and Ireland, and in 1585, knighthood. In 1587, he was given the coveted post of captain of the guard, a position that daily brought him into contact with the queen. Elizabeth once asked him in some annoyance: "When will you cease to be a beggar?" The barefaced but honest retort was typical of the man: "When your gracious majesty ceases to be a benefactor."

Raleigh was always something more than a piece of costly tinsel in Elizabeth's display of royalty. Gloriana doubtless admired her "Water," as she affectionately nicknamed him, for his dark beard, curly hair, and foppish elegance, but it was his quickness of mind and impertinence of speech that impressed her most; and much to the annoyance of the court, Elizabeth took him "for a kind of oracle, which nettled them all." There were few men in England who could gull their queen, but Raleigh did so when he boasted that he knew his tobacco so well that he could actually weigh the smoke. Elizabeth rose to the bait and wagered him that he could not make good his claim. Sir Walter simply weighed the tobacco, smoked it in his silver pipe, weighed the ashes, subtracted one from the other, and presented the queen with the answer. As she paid her debt Elizabeth wryly remarked that she had heard of men "who turned gold into smoke," but Raleigh was the first man she ever encountered "who had turned smoke into gold."

For five years, Raleigh stood guard at the queen's door, hated by all who begrudged him his riches and his closeness to Elizabeth. In 1587, however, another star was born, and Sir Walter discovered he had to reckon with an impudent lad of nineteen, the young Earl of Essex, whose open face and soft, sensuous smile touched the heart of a middle-aged queen. Soon court gossip was reporting that Essex "hath chased Master Raleigh from the court and hath confined him into Ireland."

Certainly the young nobleman displaced the forty-year-old captain of the guard in his privileged position as royal confidant, but what ultimately destroyed Raleigh was his own conceit. Despite his virtuosity and imagination, Sir Walter was a sublime egotism, blind to the feelings of others, disdainful of the foibles of mankind, and insensitive and tactless in his criticism of convention. The animosity so often directed at him was largely of his own making. He was far too contemptuous of the shibboleths of polite society, and though the queen might find his barbed wit diverting, the ladies of the court could scarcely have been expected to take to their hearts a man who unflatteringly described them as witches who "could do hurt, but they could do no good." Raleigh knew well the proverb: "Slippery is the place next to kings." He himself had written "whoso reaps renown above the rest, / With heaps of hate shall surely be oppressed." But so long as Elizabeth smiled, the angry tongues and envious glances of his fellow courtiers could do Raleigh no harm.

In 1592, Raleigh made the serious mistake of shocking Elizabeth, who held strict views on the proper sexual behavior of those attending upon a virgin queen. Rumor reported that Sir Walter had been "too inward with one of her majesty's maids"; and so he had, for Mistress Throckmorton had been undone, and the unmistakable signs of pregnancy began to appear in the fall of 1591. In November, Raleigh and his young mistress were secretly married, and on March 29, a son - Damerei Raleigh - was born. Incredible as it may sound, the Earl of Essex stood godfather to the boy.

If Raleigh hoped to escape the queen's wrath by enlisting his rival's favor, he badly miscalculated. Despite the marriage and the blessing of Essex, Elizabeth took the view that one of her vestal virgins had been ravished. She was no prude, but she refused to countenance at her court the kind of sexual

laxity prevalent at the court of that amorous sovereign, Henry IV of France. She withheld her fury for several months, but in August 1592, the brash couple was dispatched to the Tower to meditate upon the consequences of incontinence. Raleigh's stay in the Tower lasted little more than a month, but his career at court was over.

The queen liked her courtly favorites to be of noble birth; with Raleigh she had made an exception, but in Essex she found the perfect Harlequin to her aging Columbine. The Earl of Leicester, Essex's stepfather and Elizabeth's exasperating but beloved beau of yesteryear, introduced the young Earl to court, where he attracted the queen's attention in 1586. Romantically handsome, irresistibly young, impetuously generous, carrying "on his brow either love or hatred," and never able to "understand concealment," Essex had the world at his feet. The queen sighed at the sight of so much promise and had to have her Essex in constant attendance. Together they played at cards and chatted until dawn, and Elizabeth put up with more sulking and more dangerous nonsense from this spoiled favorite than she ever had even from her "Robin," the Earl of Leicester. Essex was "a great resenter." He complained about Raleigh and called him a knave, an upstart, and a vegetable of the court, and when Elizabeth still showed fondness for her "Water," he tried to steal off to the Netherlands to find solace in war. He petulantly insulted Charles Blount, who was presented by Elizabeth with a gold chess queen in recognition of his feats at the tilt. Blount appeared at court with his token tied by a crimson ribbon to his sleeve, and on spying it, Essex sneered in a loud voice: "Now I see every fool must have a favor."

For all his trying ways, the Earl of Essex must have had great magnetism to have charmed Elizabeth into giving him real responsibility. She allowed his passionate pleading to override her better judgment and sent him to France to lead an expeditionary force in support of Henry IV. The tiny army landed in August 1591, with explicit orders to aid in the siege of Rouen and then return home after no more than two months. Rouen never fell; it was not even attacked until many months later, but Essex had a marvelous time. He outjumped the French king at a game of leapfrog, nearly fell into an ambush, challenged the governor of Rouen to personal combat, and lavishly bestowed knighthood upon twenty-four of his henchmen after apologizing for not having

led them into battle, where they could have gained honor and earned their spurs. Elizabeth was understandably annoyed. She scornfully dismissed Essex's parading as "rather a jest than a victory," and ordered the errant commander home. The earl was amazed by such treatment and complained bitterly about being "blamed as negligent, undutiful, rash in going, slow in returning, undiscreet in dividing the horse from the foot, faulty in all things, because I was not fortunate to please."

It is difficult to say where Essex was more dangerous: at court, exercising his fatal charm and repairing his reputation in the queen's eyes, or abroad, handling the serious concerns of war and diplomacy as if they were sports designed to display his virtuosity and daring. With Leicester's death in 1588, Elizabeth turned emotionally and politically to his stepson, so like him in his surly pride and winsome ways. She needed a counterbalance to the two Cecils - old Lord Burghley and his son Robert - and she had hopes of transforming her divine juvenile into a court politician. Essex, although eager for power, had neither the patience nor the sagacity to develop into a statesman, however. Like Raleigh, Drake, and the other heroes, he lacked emotional stability and a sense of proportion. His idea of politics was to demand all sorts of offices and gifts for his friends, without regard for their qualifications or their acceptability to the queen, and when he was turned down he sulked and took it as a personal affront.

Essex must have been maddening and perplexing to his sovereign. At one moment, he could dismiss politics with disarming candor as being beneath his dignity and intelligence, at the next he could be furious with Elizabeth for giving high offices to young Robert Cecil. Above all, the earl desired a chance for renown - not at court but in war. "Soldiers in peace," it was said, were "like chimneys in summer." In June 1596, he finally got his opportunity when the wind blew fair, and the queen's ships once again set sail on an expedition to Spain.

Here was the chance to win glory, achieve immortality, and relieve Philip of the fabulous riches of his empire. Seventeen of England's great galleons and merchantmen, accompanied by an armada of transports, pinnaces, and flyboats, and a disciplined army of 6,000 - one-third of them veterans of the Dutch wars - were being sent for a second time to harass

Spanish naval power by a strike at Cadiz. Lord Howard of Armada fame and the inexperienced Earl of Essex were given joint command; Raleigh was restored to partial favor, made vice-admiral, and placed on the five-man council of war authorized to advise the commanders. Such an expedition, led by the most famous captains of the older and younger generations, attracted an enormous number of volunteers; even John Donne went avoyaging in quest, one imagines, of more than inspiration for his poetry. The fleet's destination remained one of the few well-kept military secrets of the century, but it was quite apparent that some great enterprise was being planned against Spain.

Captains and sailors, generals and soldiers consciously put out of their minds the memory of a similar expedition under Sir Francis Drake, which had set sail in 1589 with equally high hopes and had returned home a costly failure. It had netted one Spanish warship destroyed, plunder of only 30,000 pounds, and had cost the lives of about half of the original company. Not even the death of Drake himself in February 1596, a few months before the new fleet set sail for Cadiz, dampened enthusiasm for the expedition. Drake perished while he was fighting an outdated kind of war, his tactics appropriate to those days before Philip had learned to defend his treasure fleets and Caribbean ports. The old warrior had relied, as always, on lady fortune, and for once, she played him false. His night attack on Puerto Rico had been beaten back, his efforts to cross the Isthmus of Panama had ended in a rout, and no gold or treasure galleons had been discovered. Rather wearily, the veteran pirate had assured his crew: "I will bring you to twenty places far more wealthy and easier to be gotten," but he never did; he died of dysentery instead, and true to form, in his last moments, he rose and donned his armor, saying that he would face death like a soldier. Somewhere off the coast of Panama near Portobello, his coffin was slipped into the sea.

The new enterprise was far more substantial than Drake's last voyages. A fleet of around 120 sails, under the daring Essex, the elegant Raleigh, and the veteran Lord Admiral Howard, and blessed with a prayer written by the queen herself, was a different matter. The volunteers who flocked to Plymouth thought of the 4,700 percent profit made by those who had invested in Drake's famous voyage around the world or the even more fabulous treasures seized in 1592 when Sir Martin

Frobisher captured the 1600-ton, seven-deck, thirty-two-gun Portuguese carrack, the *Madre de Dios*, carrying a 537-ton cargo of spices and precious jewels, silks, drugs, carpets, Chinese porcelain, ebony, and "elephants' teeth." The value of the cargo, even after the crew had plundered some 100,000 pounds worth of jewels, spices, plate, and gold, was estimated at 141,200 pounds, an impressive sum, indeed, when the greatest galleon in the queen's navy could be built, fitted, and manned for less than 5,000 pounds, a nobleman's estate purchased for 17,000 pounds, and an entire army raised for 40,000 pounds. The sailor who was lucky enough to find 320 "sparks of diamond" and "a collar of a threefold roll of pearl with six tags of crystal garnished with gold" had a king's ransom in his pocket. It was the dream of such riches that filled the heart of every officer, soldier, and sailor when the fleet finally set sail on June 3, 1596.

The second Cadiz expedition came close to being the most extraordinary feat of the century; for once, heroism, rampant individualism, and foolhardy histrionics paid off. From the start, the gods were kind even to captains, who were inordinately touchy about rank and authority and who followed only those plans of action that happened to coincide with their own ideas. Before the fleet even sailed, Vice Admiral Walter Raleigh and marshal of the army Sir Francis Vere had a row at dinner over precedence, and the younger and more hotheaded officers quarreled so openly that one of them, Raleigh's brother-in-law, had to be ordered from the table. Howard and Essex were suspicious of Sir Walter because they thought he had tried to persuade Elizabeth to give him sole command. The Lord Admiral was angered by the fact that the Earl of Essex had been made joint commander, and when Essex inserted his own signature above Howard's in a report to the queen, the Lord Admiral whipped out his knife and cut out the offending name because he "would have none so high as himself." "I see already," wrote one of the younger generation on board the fleet, "the fire kindled that must consume us inwardly"; but the depressing prediction proved false, and the damnable pride, the braggadocio, and quarreling that was so much a part of Elizabethan life for once proved a source of strength and won an outstanding triumph for the queen.

On Sunday morning, June 20, while the church bells of Cadiz rang out the alarm, the English approached the complicated

and well-fortified harbor and discovered King Philip's entire West Indian fleet at anchor. Thirty-six loaded merchantmen, ready to set sail for the Caribbean, were awaiting their escorting galleons, which were being refitted at another port nearby. Only four huge galleons, known as the Apostles, and a small flotilla of other ships had been left behind to guard them. Cadiz itself was located at the tip of a five-mile-long spit of land, its ocean approaches defended by the high walls and cannons of Fort San Sebastian and its bay side protected by Fort St. Philip. Beyond the outer harbor was the inner one, Port Royal, six miles away, with an escape canal that led out into the sea some ten miles below Cadiz. When the English appeared, the smaller of the merchantmen scampered to the safety of the inner harbor, and the four Apostles, accompanied by several other large ships, anchored themselves, stem to stern, across the narrowest part of the harbor.

Howard refused to risk the queen's galleons against the combined fire of the Apostles and the heavy artillery of the land fortifications, but Raleigh was eager to proceed and pointed out that no one had decided "in what manner to fight" or "who should lead, and who should second." For once, Essex agreed with him. After a great deal of wrangling over where and how to attack and who should have the honor of leading, the English commanders settled upon a plan suggested by Raleigh. The main attack was to be launched against the Apostles guarding the entrance to the harbor, and then Cadiz was to be attacked from the bay side of the peninsula. A whole day was wasted over these discussions, but on June 21, with Raleigh in the van, since Elizabeth had issued explicit instructions that her Essex was not to risk his precious person no matter how much honor might be gained, the English fleet moved in on the four Spanish galleons - the *San Felipe*, the *San Andrés*, the *San Mateo*, and the *San Tomás*. The first two had been in on the death of Grenville's ship, the *Revenge*, and Raleigh headed straight for them resolved on retribution or, as he said, "to second her with mine own life."

What followed was a fairy tale come true. As the English squadrons approached and the Spanish guns began to thunder, Raleigh ordered his trumpeters to answer each salvo with a fanfare, "disdaining to shoot one piece at any one or all of those esteemed dreadful monsters." Once engaged with

the Apostles, Essex, Raleigh, Vere, and Howard vied with one another to maneuver closest to the enemy's fire, and for three hellish hours each commander kept as careful an eye on his rival as he did on the enemy. Raleigh ended this piece of mad daring by warping his ship, the *Warspite*, close enough to the *San Felipe* to grapple and board her. Essex and Howard followed suit. When the Spanish saw the English closing in on them, they cut cable, intending to slip into the inner harbor at Port Royal, but wind, tide, fire, and panic destroyed them. All four giant galleons drifted aground; two were captured, and two others went up in an inferno of roaring flames and exploding cannons. Even the hardened Raleigh was horrified by the sight and wrote that if "any man had a desire to see hell itself, it was then most lively figured."

The moment the four Apostles were routed, Essex ordered his troops ashore to establish a bridgehead and prepare a bivouac. With the earl in the lead boat, beating cadence on a drum, 2,000 men made an unopposed landing. It was then discovered that the peninsula was only half a mile wide at the point of landing and that Cadiz could be cut off and attacked at once. Essex led his troops on the run for three miles over soft sand to Cadiz, scaled the walls of the city at the head of a company of 300 men, and with some fifty soldiers fought his way to the central square. Sir Francis Vere, with a larger contingent, preferred a more orthodox entrance and broke through the gates of the city to join Essex in driving the Spanish forces into the citadel of St. Philip. By nightfall, except for the castle, Cadiz lay at the mercy of English troops, who by the rules of war could do as they pleased with the inhabitants and their possessions.

The usual scene of rape, wanton destruction, and slaughter, which was the fate of most sixteenth- century cities unfortunate enough to be captured in war, did not take place, for honor required mercy as well as heroism, and the English captains kept their men under unusual control. The city fathers were allowed to ransom their lives for 120,000 ducats; more than 100 of the wealthiest gentlewomen were ferried to safety and were permitted to take with them much of their jewelry and as many clothes as they could wear; and more than 1,500 priests, monks, and women were escorted out of the city and to the mainland. Only the Dutch regiments were anxious to put the citizens to the sword, and they were restrained by Raleigh and Essex.

Even so, Cadiz was pillaged, and contrary to the queen's command, every man was allowed to keep whatever he could grab: diamonds, jewelry, gold, silks - anything that glittered and caught the eye. Protestant sailors and soldiers strutted about in clerical vestments; the streets were cluttered with furniture, books, and bedding that had been cast out of windows in the frantic search for more portable and valuable loot; and everyone seemed to have forgotten the merchant fleet and the war galleys that lay huddled in the inner harbor. Troops assigned to guard the canal leading out of Port Royal hurried off to join the sack of Cadiz, and twelve of the galleys escaped into the open sea and made it safely up the coast to Rota. The tradesmen of the city, presuming that the English had already secured the merchant fleet, offered to ransom it for 2 million ducats. Howard refused, demanding 4 million for the merchandise alone. While the Lord Admiral and the Spanish haggled, Howard's old enemy, Medina Sidonia, had his revenge upon the English in a way only a Spanish grandee could have conceived. With a splendid disregard for mercantile interests and a nobleman's contempt for trade, he ordered the burning of the entire fleet and its cargo, valued at 8 to 12 million ducats.

The destruction of the merchant fleet restored a certain degree of chilly sanity to the English ranks. The leaders were worried about Elizabeth's reactions to such negligence, and Raleigh, Essex, and Howard each sent off special messengers in an effort to be first with their own highly colored versions of the victory. The Lord Admiral and Essex quarreled bitterly over whose fault the loss of the merchant fleet was, and they disagreed over the advisability of garrisoning and fortifying Cadiz. Essex was all in favor of staying on and nominated himself as the new governor of the city. He gave up this scheme after being voted down by the council of war, but he had the satisfaction of being the last Englishman to leave Cadiz before the fleet sailed homeward.

The returning heroes met with a mixed reception at court. Elizabeth could not deny the magnitude of the victory: four of the largest galleons in the Spanish navy had been sunk or captured; thirty-six immense merchantmen, three ships loaded with ordnance and cannon shot for the war in Holland, and an array of lesser craft had been burned with their cargoes; 120,000 ducats had been paid in ransom, and the English carried home the president of the famous school of

navigation at Seville in the vain expectation that he would fetch a handsome ransom. What irritated the queen was the inexcusable loss of the merchant fleet, the irresponsible and dangerously regal fashion in which Essex had cheapened the honor of knighthood by creating more than sixty knights, and the ill chance by which the West Indian treasure fleet, worth 20 million ducats, sailed into Lisbon harbor two days after the fleet had left the Spanish coast. Moreover, Elizabeth was outraged by the cavalier disregard of her orders that all plunder was to be regarded as crown property earmarked to help defray the cost of the expedition. Publicly she thanked her heroes: "Let the army know I care not so much for being queen, as that I am sovereign of such subjects"; and she allowed a popular celebration of the triumph, but limited it to London. Privately, she raged at her military leaders and had her revenge upon Essex by forcing him to renounce most of his share of the plunder. Elizabeth was able to keep Raleigh's takings down to 1,769 pounds, but she could do little about the fortunes quietly pocketed by soldiers and sailors and even by her own agent, who had been sent with the fleet to look after the crown's interests. Where, Elizabeth wanted to know, was the 50,000 pounds she had invested in the venture? Essex, Raleigh, Vere, and the rest had acquired glory, but the queen had only an empty exchequer, and as usual, she didn't like it.

Brilliant as Raleigh's role had been at Cadiz, he was never restored to full royal favor, though he did regain the captaincy of the guard. Despite the queen's annoyance at his irresponsibility, Essex remained the hero of the voyage and the queen's darling. Even so, the earl was not satisfied. Court life did not become him. He lacked a graceful step both in politics and on the ballroom floor. He had had to share the honors with the old Lord Admiral Howard, and the queen persisted in turning down almost every candidate he nominated for high office. Morosely, he had to listen to the whispered truth that he was able to get anything for himself but nothing for his friends.

At nineteen, Essex had been willing to sit at the feet of his Faerie Queene in attitudes of courtly adoration, but by 1596, he had outgrown such love tricks. He sought power commensurate with his pride. He wanted a political party of his own, independent of royal favor like that of the French Duke of Guise. The beggar's role imposed on him by Elizabeth

galled his dignity; her constant rejections insulted his ego. It seemed to Essex that only another brilliant feat of war could give him the mastery he desired at court, and he pestered Gloriana for a sole command in yet another blow against Spain. In June 1597, he received his wish: the leadership of a fleet almost as large as the Cadiz expedition, and this time completely in the hands of young heroes of "sweet conversation" and "greatness of mind."

Great was Essex's optimism. One Dutch and three English squadrons, totaling seventeen galleons, some seventy-five lesser vessels, and a picked army of 6,000 seasoned troops aboard twenty-four transports, were assembled at Plymouth, with precise orders to destroy the Spanish fleet gathering at El Ferrol. Philip's naval resources were apparently endless; during the winter of 1597, he had been able to scrape together yet another armada, this time under the experienced leadership of the *adelantado*, or governor, of Castile, the nobleman whom Medina Sidonia had once suggested as a captain more suitable than himself for the post of Admiral of the Ocean Sea. Essex was instructed first to destroy the king's fleet and naval installations "with the least danger and loss of our people," and then to sail for the Azores to intercept the treasure flota, seize the island of Terceira, and establish a permanent English base there. From the start, observers anticipated nothing but evil for the voyage and gloomily predicted that the fleet at El Ferrol would not be burned, the treasure flota would not be captured, nor would the Azores be taken. Englishmen wondered whether the King of Spain and all his riches were worth the risk of so many lives.

Such pessimism was quickly justified, for everything went wrong from the start. Essex, Raleigh, and young Lord Thomas Howard commanded the three English squadrons. Sir Francis Vere sailed as marshal, but was chagrined to discover that the position of lieutenant of the land forces had been given to Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy. Essex tried to mollify his most experienced army commander by blaming the queen for this appointment, but Vere suspected with reason that, since Blount belonged to the earl's following at court, it had been made at Essex's request. For the first time, the earl was totally on his own; Howard proved himself the better sailor, but cautiously stayed in the background, and Vere, by far the abler general, sulkily refused to give advice.

The weather was as unreasonable and unmanageable as were the captains. On July 10, after weeks of frustrating delay, the fleet sailed from Plymouth with much fanfare, only to limp back about a week later, having encountered heavy seas in which both Raleigh and Essex came near to sinking. Howard rode out the fury of the gale and provokingly swept down the Spanish coast to the point of rendezvous off Corunna to wait for his chief. He returned on July 31 to discover Essex having his battered ships repaired and struggling to prevent discouraged and seasick gentlemen volunteers from deserting. Even Raleigh was moved to compassion by the earl's troubles and wrote to Cecil begging him "to work from Her Majesty some comfort to my Lord General, who, I know, is dismayed by these mischances even to death, although there could not be more done by any man upon the earth, God having turned the heavens with the fury against us, a matter beyond the power or valor, or wit of man to resist. . ."

Valor was of little avail against a perverse and maddening heaven. The wind continued to blow from the west, and the fleet remained harbor-bound until August 14, when Essex set sail, leaving behind a large part of the army. More than the weather was frustrating the Lord General. The fact of the matter was that neither the earl nor Raleigh wanted to obey the queen's explicit command to head for El Ferrol and destroy the Spanish fleet, for both men had their eyes on the plunder of the treasure flota. The burning of the Spanish fleet in port was out of the question with so few English troops available; and gales and contrary winds scattered the English ships, giving Essex an excuse for heading for the rich hunting ground of the Azores without even looking in at El Ferrol. Although the various elements of the English navy reached the Azores, riches and honor remained always just over the horizon. For Essex, bad luck, nervous dread of failure, and constant slights to his pride, seemed to be the only realities of a venture in which he almost invariably guessed wrong, failed to give adequate orders to his subordinates, and was forever chasing after mare's-nests.

They decided, while awaiting the treasure fleet, to attack the various islands of the Azores: Mountjoy was to head for St. Michael, the Dutch for Pico, Howard and Vere for Gratiosa, and Essex and Raleigh for Fayal. While Raleigh's squadron was taking on water, Essex suddenly rushed off to seek the fleet of the *adelantado*, who was reported to have left El

Ferrol to meet and escort the West Indian fleet from the Azores to Spain. Hurriedly the earl ordered Raleigh to meet him at Fayal, but failed to mention the fact that he himself would not arrive there for several days. When Sir Walter's squadron reached its anchorage off Horta, he found no Essex, and to make matters worse, the people of Horta rapidly began to clear the town of all valuables and to disappear into the hills. For three days, Raleigh waited while his men watched the dream of plunder vanish before their eyes. The problem was again the sticky question of honor and command. Essex and Raleigh had been assigned to seize the island together. Moreover, the earl was the senior officer of the fleet and was expected to assume command and have the first bid at glory. Raleigh, on the other hand, had been left without instructions, and he did not regard himself as being inferior in authority to Essex. As he put it, he was one of the principal commanders of the fleet and as such was not subject to the queen's patents prohibiting captains from acting without orders.

If Raleigh's landing on Fayal had not so redounded to his honor, Essex might not have been so infuriated. Sir Walter led his men ashore in face of Spanish troops entrenched on the beach, forced his way into the town of Horta, and won immense renown by risking his life, first by walking nonchalantly across the field of fire without his helmet or armor and then by reconnoitering enemy territory. In this second venture, he had asked for volunteers, but when no one spoke up, he scornfully announced he would go himself. Donning his helmet and breastplate and accompanied by his cousin, Sir Arthur Gorges, he crawled forward against heavy Spanish musket fire. Both men were wearing gaily colored scarves that attracted the enemy's attention; bullets tore at Raleigh's clothing and a shot grazed Gorges's leg, but neither of the heroes would doff the conspicuous garments, being unwilling "to do the Spaniards so much honor" by removing their colors. Raleigh's charmed life remained impervious to Spanish shells, and both men won great esteem for one of the more senseless performances of the entire expedition.

Next morning, when Essex finally put in an appearance, the entire island, except the fort above the town, was in English hands, and a jubilant Raleigh rowed out to see his commander. He met with an icy reception, and some of the lesser officers around the earl actually urged him to court-

martial and execute his disobedient vice admiral. Eventually, Thomas Howard made peace between the two men. Essex accepted a rather grudging apology from Ra-eigh for his unauthorized landing and revenged himself by omitting all mention of Sir Walter's exploits in his official report to the queen.

Tension between the two leaders was not eased by the discovery that the Spanish in the fort had made off while the English captains bickered, taking with them almost everything worth plundering and leaving behind a Dutch and an English prisoner, each with his throat cut. Further acrimony was forestalled for the moment by a report of the approach of the treasure flota. Essex spread a cordon about the island of Terceira, with its heavily fortified port of Angra, but he was so worried that the Spanish fleet might elude him, he kept changing his position. Three hours after he had moved his ships, the entire West Indian fleet, rich with the treasures of the New World, majestically sailed to safety into Angra through the same place that Essex had evacuated. There was not even to be a consolation prize. A huge 1,800-ton carrack, which was almost trapped by Raleigh, escaped capture by running itself aground near the town of St. Michael. The Spaniards rushed out in small boats and rescued the crew and some of the cargo before burning the ship. Essex had gone off to seize the town of Villa Franca so as to approach St. Michael from the rear while Raleigh continued his blockade of the harbor. The army, however, discovered vast quantities of wine and melons at Villa Franca and failed to make the planned attack on St. Michael. Raleigh and the sailors all pointed out that if Essex and the army had done their part, the plunder of the great carrack would have fallen to the English.

As Essex cruised disconsolately and aimlessly about the Azores, reluctantly making up his mind to return home sans honor and sans profit to face the anger of the queen and the smiles of all his ill-wishers at court, England lay exposed to invasion by the fleet that Elizabeth had wanted to be burned at El Ferrol. Urged on by a dying Philip, who sought one last chance to achieve God's purpose against the heretics, the *adelantado* of Castile set sail from El Ferrol on October 9 with 136 ships, 4,000 sailors, and 9,000 soldiers. The Spanish planned to seize the Channel port of Falmouth for their base of operations, deposit a garrison there, and then turn out to

sea again to await the arrival of Essex's fleet from the Azores. Whatever the merits or demerits of such a scheme - and certainly it had the advantage of catching the English totally unprepared - once again the heavens intervened: The autumn gales blew, and the winds dispersed the Spanish fleet as the English squadron swept homeward, each of its captains frantic to be first with his own version of the miserable failure.

The queen was thoroughly irked by her heroic children, and with good reason. She blamed Essex for having left her realm defenseless while he gallivanted without profit about the Azores, and she showed unusual self-restraint when she limited her criticism to the weary remark: "When we do look back to the beginning of this action which hath stirred so great expectation in the world and charged us so deeply, we cannot but be sorry to foresee already how near all our expectations and your great hopes are to a fruitless conclusion." Evidently, Elizabeth had finally learned the true worth of her Essex. She had known what to expect and had prepared herself for a "fruitless conclusion."

While Raleigh strutted like a peacock or withdrew into a mantle of cold contempt, and Essex alternated between spells of boyish enthusiasm and petulant temper tantrums, Elizabeth turned more and more to a nobleman of different mettle. Robert Cecil, the hunchbacked son of Lord Burghley, had received from his father some sound if sententious advice on how to succeed in the Elizabethan world. "Toward thy superiors," he warned, "be humble yet generous; with thy equals familiar yet respective; toward thy inferiors show much humility and some familiarity"; for "the first prepares the way to thy advancement; the second makes thee known for a man well bred; the third gains a good report which once gotten may be safely kept." Then the wise old Lord Treasurer drove home his lesson by examples from his son's generation. "Yet do I advise thee not to affect nor neglect popularity too much. Seek not to be E[ssex] and shun to be R[aleigh]."

The advice was well taken and carefully learned, for Robert Cecil rose to be the principal minister of both Elizabeth and James I, whereas Essex and Raleigh consumed themselves, their fortunes, and ultimately their lives in the fires of their own megalomania. Essex so forgot himself and his ordained

place in society that he endeavored to usurp a function not properly his own: the right to rule. An inflated ego led him into treason during the twilight of the great queen's reign.

Raleigh's destruction came more slowly. His fate was to live on after the Elizabethan age, a fallen Lucifer whose pride could not be suffered by contemporaries because it was sustained by extraordinary talent. Society might have accepted Sir Walter Raleigh's brilliant versatility - soldier and businessman, sailor and scientist, explorer and poet, colonizer and musician, shipbuilder and historian but it could not stomach the damnable laughter with which he dismissed a world that had permitted him to excel.

Tell potentates, they live

Acting by others' action;

Not loved unless they give,

Not strong but by affection:

If potentates reply,

Give potentates the lie.

Tell men of high condition,

That manage the estate,

Their purpose is ambition,

Their practice only hate:

And if they once reply,

Then give them all the lie.

Tell zeal it wants devotion;

Tell love it is but lust:

Tell time it is but motion,

Tell flesh it is but dust:

And wish them not reply

For thou must give the lie.

Tell physic of her boldness;

Tell skill it is pretention;

Tell charity of coldness;

Tell law it is contention:

And as they do reply,

So give them still the lie.

It was left for a Stuart king to strike off the head of the man who delighted in giving the lie to the standards by which he chose to live.

Doubtless there was a fundamental rottenness about the final decade of Gloriana's reign, an artificiality that the tinsel of the court could conceal no more than cosmetics could hide the fact that the queen was growing old and ugly. Years later, after emotional exhaustion had set in, and society had grown tired of its heroes, Raleigh looked back upon the heroic age and sadly confessed that "all is vanity and weariness." But Sir Walter added one last nostalgic comment: it had been "such a weariness and vanity that we shall ever complain of it and love it for all that." It had been good to be alive in those days when men had lived like gods. Humanity had enjoyed even its weariness and had gloried in the vanity of life because the great feats of heroism had not been done solely for reasons of greed and egotism. Insatiable curiosity, the excitement of discovery, and above all imagination had urged Drake on around the world, had sustained Gilbert's dream of colonizing a new land, and had filled the heart of Essex. Lust for glory, plunder, and immortality drove them on, but so did the wonderful romance and secret fear of new worlds to conquer, new universes to comprehend, new gods to worship, and new horizons to lure them onward to "the discovery of things which were hidden from other men."

X

NEW HORIZONS

On March 4, 1493, Christopher Columbus sailed the battered *Niña* into Lisbon harbor and demanded that the churches be filled with blossoms and boughs in his honor. In October of the same year, a historian at the court of Ferdinand and Isabella wrote skeptically to a friend that the Italian adventurer was "back safe and sound, and declares he has found wonders." Sixty years later, any hint of incredulity had vanished, and another historian had only unqualified praise for Columbus and his achievement. The finding of a New World, he wrote, was "the greatest event since the creation of the world, apart from the incarnation and death of Him who created it." The magnitude of the exploit is difficult to comprehend; it cannot even be compared to the conquest of space, for the twentieth century was intellectually and emotionally prepared for almost any kind of discovery expecting and even desiring to be astonished. The sixteenth century had no such preparation or predilection for change. Authority, blessed by generations of churchmen and supported by the giants of classical scholarship, was the intellectual rock upon which medieval society rested. Authority was a little fanciful about details, but the main outlines of its position were clear and incontrovertible. Man lived on an earth that held the place of honor at the center of the universe; it was "like the yolk in the middle of an egg," and around it the heavenly spheres revolved, making music in the firmament. Medieval cartographers accepted the word of Ptolemy and recorded the earth's circumference as just under 20,000 miles, and they followed the leadership of the Church in assuming that the human race was confined to the northern hemisphere by an impenetrable torrid belt that encircled the earth in the region of the equator.

Within two generations of Columbus's voyage of discovery, these medieval concepts were smashed beyond recognition. The world suddenly expanded by some 5,000 miles; two new continents were located; and Europeans had to accept the serious possibility that there might be an antipode whose inhabitants lived "foot to foot" with them. Even before the proportions of a new and enlarged earth had been fully realized, more unnerving discoveries were being made. Within fifty years of Columbus's voyage to America, the form of the heavens themselves was being called into doubt. The two revolutions, which overturned the traditional ideas of the earth and the universe, erupted at almost the same time, and

between them they destroyed the intellectual underpinnings of the past and cast Adam and all his race out of the secure Eden of a scripturally intelligible world and an anthropomorphic universe.

Rewriting geography caught the imagination, and Europe was soon swept up in the romance of discovery. Recasting the universe, however, filled the mind with terror. Adventurers dared the unknown and went to test for themselves Raleigh's assurance that "there are stranger things to be seen in the world than are between London and Staines"; but it took men of even stronger mettle to risk their souls by imagining a new cosmology in which the earth and its sister planets hurtled in senseless orbit about the sun.

Medieval man was not accustomed to thinking of the earth as a geographic entity. His horizons were those of his village, his landmarks were the ancient oak and the narrow footpath, and his unknown was just over the neighboring hill. The world that lay beyond sight and sound was hidden by a heavy fog of ignorance, which was so complete that men did not even possess the vocabulary that would enable them to think in global terms. Their world was not flat, as is so often suggested, rather it lacked continents and was seen as composed of a series of separate and uninhabitable zones (the Arctic, Antarctic, and Torrid), and a single land mass, the *orbis terrarum*, of Asia, Africa, and Europe. The concept of an earth covered by seas, with occasional islands of land, was alien to the medieval mind, which visualized the oceans as lakes surrounded by land and considered Jerusalem the center of the world.

What medieval geography lacked in accuracy it made up in imagination. The Garden of Eden and other regions of Christian mythology were thought of as geographic realities. The East was a land of fantasy where dwarfs and giants, griffins and unicorns, dog-headed demons and huge clubfooted men lived amidst marvelous wealth and endless commotion. The Indus, the Ganges, and the Nile were associated with the rivers of paradise, and the mysterious land of Gog and Magog was placed somewhere east of Eden. Africa and Asia were happily confused, and the Indian Ocean was often pictured as a lake bounded by India and Ethiopia. Fountains of youth and rivers of gold were always to be found in India and darkest Africa, and the Atlantic Ocean was

regarded as populated with sea serpents and other grotesque monsters that fed on foolhardy mariners.

On one point learned cartographers and superstitious sailors were correct: The Atlantic Ocean was an almost insurmountable obstacle even to the most daring seafarer. Once he had lost sight of land, the medieval adventurer faced the ocean with no means of navigation, and he sailed in a frail vessel that could make no headway against a contrary wind. In the fifteenth century, the unknown gave way not so much to boldness as to brains. As the electronic computer and advanced mathematics have been necessary prerequisites to navigation in space, so the compass, the astrolabe, the quadrant, and the compilations of Arab mathematicians and astronomers were essential to the conquest of the oceans. The first great discoverers either were able navigators themselves or had with them pilots who could combine mathematical theory with experience at sea. By 1484, seamen could venture forth into the darkness of the broad Atlantic with a fair expectation of finding their way home again, and Vasco da Gama's triumph in rounding the Cape of Good Hope in 1497 was possible only because he had the nerve and the scientific knowledge to stand 2,000 miles out into the South Atlantic to pick up the favorable winds and currents that allowed him to clear the southern tip of Africa and sail on into the Indian Ocean.

In the conquest of the oceans, the shipwright was as important as the astronomer. The square-rigged and clumsy medieval cog, a ship that wallowed in the high waves of the Atlantic, and unless favored with a tail wind, slipped sideways faster than it moved forward, was redesigned to incorporate features of the maneuverable lateen-rigged Arab *sambuk.* The result was the Portuguese caravel, the prototype of all sixteenth-century European sailing vessels. The caravel was a seaworthy craft that could hold its course in any but the most adverse wind and was capable of undertaking voyages of 3,000 miles without a landfall.

Even when sailors and navigators had the necessary skills and ships that were capable of taking them into the vastness of the North and South Atlantic, they required stout hearts to face the elements in vessels that were scarcely larger than today's small trawlers, to exist on a diet of salt beef, beans, biscuits, stale water, and an occasional ration of wine, and to

endure months at sea with no other sleeping accommodations than the bare deck. It is little wonder that crews mutinied, pilots were disobedient, and the life expectancy of seamen was short. Even in the sixteenth century, when ships were stronger, and wind and weather conditions better understood, the mortality rate was enough to discourage the most determined adventurer. Thomas Wyndham and 100 of his crew of 140 men died of fever while sailing off the coast of Guinea in 1553; the next year, Sir Hugh Willoughby and most of his men perished when stranded north of the Arctic Circle; Richard Chancellor drowned in the autumn of 1556 while returning from Russia; Sir Humphrey Gilbert went down with all hands in 1583 in the North Atlantic; Thomas Cavendish never returned from his second attempt to circumnavigate the globe in 1591; John Davys was killed by Japanese pirates off the Malay coast; and Hawkins and Drake both died at sea on the same expedition.

Yet, for every fatality, a dozen clamored, as one Spanish conquistador put it, "to serve God and His Majesty, to give light to those who were in darkness, and to grow rich, as all men desire to do." Whether the wide harbors of the world were explored more for gain than for adventure and Christian zeal is not easy to say. Lust for the riches of India and Cathay encouraged Columbus to believe that San Salvador lay within the Japanese archipelago, urged Vasco da Gama to risk the voyage around the tip of Africa, and fostered the persistent search for a southwestern route to the Orient and a northern passage up the St. Lawrence River or through Hudson Bay. "Spices and Christians" had been Da Gama's answer as to why he had sought to reach Calicut in 1498. A single shipload of Ceylon cinnamon, Sumatra pepper, Moluccas cloves, or East Indies nutmeg was worth countless lives and failures. Ferdinand Magellan started out in 1519 to circumnavigate the globe with five ships and 234 men; only eighteen of his original crew completed the voyage three years later, but in the eyes of the investors, the tiny *Victoria's* precious cargo of cloves more than compensated for the death of the ship's captain and the loss of so many crewmen.

Europe's need to discover civilizations richer than its own in culture, luxuries, and above all in spices may have been the source of the wind that scattered "young men through the world to seek their fortunes"; but those same adventurers sailed with a double sense of superiority - confident in the

knowledge that they excelled in guns, ships, and navigational techniques, and secure in the even more comforting conviction that they were bringing Christian light to those in darkness. When the Spaniards burned the priceless Maya libraries of Yucatan, they did so because they knew that the books "contained nothing in which there was not to be seen superstition and lies of the devil." The search for the legendary Christian kingdom of Prester John was as persistent as the dream of El Dorado and was almost as important in Columbus's motivation as was his desire to reach Cathay. Throughout the age of discovery, in Protestant as well as Catholic lands, avarice marched hand in hand with a sense of self-righteous superiority. Those Most Catholic Majesties of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella, voiced the sublime egotism of all Europe when they presented Christopher Columbus with an open letter of introduction to the princes of the unknown world:

> To King -
>
> We have heard that Your Highness and your subjects entertain great love for us and for Spain. We are informed, moreover, that you and your subjects very much wish to hear news from Spain. We therefore send our admiral, Christopher Columbus, who will tell you that we are in good health and perfect prosperity.

The Admiral of the Ocean Sea carried with him copies of a more sinister document: the authority to "discover and acquire islands and mainland in the ocean sea." What he encountered threw European cartographers into confusion and Spanish merchants into dismay. Painfully and dangerously, the coastline of an immense land mass began to emerge, an unknown and disturbing impediment to the important business of reaching the Indies. For a full generation after the discovery of America, Europeans continued to look eastward and southward, and the advice of the early sixteenth century was "to the south! to the south! They that seek wealth must go to the riches of the Aequinoctial; not unto the cold and frozen north." The outlines of two new continents were gradually revealed by mariners anxious to find an entrance into the Pacific, but when the western route to India, through the Strait of Magellan, was finally located on the other side of the world in freezing Antarctic latitudes, the passage proved too

dangerous to be of commercial value. However, by the time that kings and merchants came to realize that the Orient was not, as Columbus optimistically argued, only 5,000 miles west of the Canary Islands, the imagination of Europe had been caught by the idea of a New World that might prove reality to be far more marvelous than even the most bizarre legends of the past.

Rivers of eternal life, fountains of youth, giant Amazons, hippogriffs, and satyrs - all the trappings of medieval fables - were transferred to the Americas; to them were added the wonders of reality — pyramids of skulls, human sacrifices, cannibalism, cities built on water, rivers so wide they appeared to be oceans, and above all, riches that seemed to confirm men's wildest dreams of the lands of Ophir and El Dorado. On Good Friday 1519, Cortes and 600 Spanish desperados commenced the conquest of Mexico. Within the year, they had sent home to the emperor's court in Brussels unheard-of trophies of war: "a sun all of gold, a whole fathom broad, and a moon all silver of the same size," and great piles of weapons encrusted with gold and silver, "altogether valued at 100,000 florins." When he viewed the collection, the artist Albrecht Dürer exclaimed: "All the days of my life I have seen nothing that rejoiced my heart so much as these things, for I saw amongst them wonderful works of art, and I marveled at the subtle *ingenia* of men in foreign lands."

Twelve years later came word of an even more spectacular conquest: Francisco Pizarro, with sixty- two horsemen and 106 foot soldiers, had struggled over the top of the world and descended on the rich and defenseless Inca civilization of Peru. The ransom that he received from the captured Inca king, Atahualpa, became legendary - a room twenty-two feet by seventeen feet filled as high as a man could reach with articles of silver and gold, a fortune estimated at 4.5 million ducats. It was the vision of similar lands and treasures that in 1535 led Jacques Cartier ever deeper into Canada as he sought the imaginary kingdom of Saguenay, which was always just beyond the great forest somewhere up the Ottawa River. Only disappointment awaited Cartier at the end of his journey, for he never found his phantom land, and the twelve barrels of gold that he brought back to France turned out to be iron pyrites, or fool's gold. His precious stones were quartz, and sixteenth-century Parisians coined a new phrase for the counterfeit - *diamants de Canada.*

Although failure continued to dog the efforts of those who sought a golden shower in the north, the south remained an inexhaustible source of riches and reputations. The silver mines of Zacatecas, in Mexico, and the Potosí lode, in Bolivia, were opened up in the 1540s and started a rush of fortune hunters anxious to share in the flood of precious metals. In the next century and a half, 18,600 tons of silver and 200 tons of gold poured into the coffers of the kings of Spain, and possibly again as much reached the pockets of private prospectors. The world remembered that Francisco Pizarro, the illiterate and illegitimate son of a Spanish officer, had won for himself a fortune and the title of marquis; it forgot that he was murdered in the process.

Until Elizabeth's reign, England's role in the drama of discovery remained that of a passive but avidly interested spectator who begrudged Spain and Portugal their good fortune but lacked the energy to challenge their monopoly. English fishermen did sail out toward the Grand Banks off Newfoundland, the chimera of a northern passage to China took Richard Chancellor to Russia in 1553, and the profits of the slave trade led the cousins John Hawkins and Francis Drake first to Africa and then deep into the Spanish Caribbean during the 1560s. However, it was not until after Sir Humphrey Gilbert presented his *Discourse of a Discovery for a New Passage to Cathay* in 1576, and Drake in the *Golden Hind* sailed into Plymouth harbor on September 26, 1580, with a 4,700 percent profit in his hold, that England took its place as a maritime power.

Of all the adventurers who went down to the sea in ships, "putting a girdle round about the world" with their naval daring, the one most enthralled by the romance of the New World was Sir Walter Raleigh. "What shall we be," he asked, "travelers or tinkers; conquerors or novices?" In answer to his own question he set out in 1595 upon an adventure more fit for boys than for aging heroes: to find the fabled land of El Dorado, where the clothing of kings and commoners and even the kitchen pots and pans were made of gold. Stories of a city of gold had been heard almost from the moment the first white man set foot in Central and South America. Its exact whereabouts was elusive, but one persistent report located El Dorado, or what the natives called Manoa, in the upper reaches of the Orinoco River, presumably on the assumption that if the city existed at all, it could be reached only by

penetrating the most pestilent and inaccessible jungles of South America.

For years, Raleigh gleaned from seamen and Spanish reports every scrap of information he could find about Guiana and the Orinoco. When he finally set sail, a dozen distinguished persons had been persuaded by his silver tongue to invest in the dream or actually join the expedition. Lord Admiral Howard gave money, and the sons of Sir Richard Grenville and Sir Humphrey Gilbert both sailed with the fleet when it put out to sea with high hopes on February 6, 1595.

By chance, Sir Walter captured the one Spaniard who knew most about Guiana and who was himself obsessed with the legend of a civilization of gold located past one of the endless bends of the Orinoco. Don Antonio de Berrio, last of the Spanish conquistadors, had been searching the area for fifteen years, and he communicated his zeal to his English captor. Encouraged by Berrio, Raleigh had one of the smallest of his ships fitted for river travel, and with 100 men began the long ordeal of rowing up the Orinoco. For the first time, he began to appreciate the hell that De Soto, Champlain, Pizarro, Cartier, and the rest of the great adventurers had endured. He was forced "to lie in the rain and weather, in the open air, in the burning sun, and upon the hard boards," and conditions became so foul that "there was never any prison in England that could be found more unsavory and loathsome."

At forty-three, the gallant captain longed for the comforts of a feather bed and a decently cooked meal, but he took what comfort he could from his vision and continued on into the labyrinth of tributaries that flowed into the Orinoco. Raleigh found no golden cities, but he saw wonders that made him all the more willing to believe the fairy tales told by the Indian population. Three hundred miles inland, he encountered a land rich in game and the fullness of the earth, where every pebble seemed to hold the promise of a fortune. It was "the most beautiful country that ever mine eyes beheld," he later wrote. Only the ugly crocodiles that swam in the wake of his ship, and to which one of his company fell victim, marred this demi-paradise. He beheld the great falls of the Caroni, over a series of cliffs, where the rushing water sent up a mist so thick that the English "took it at the first for a smoke that had risen over some great town."

From the Indians, Raleigh learned of sights even more marvelous: of kings who clothed themselves in gold dust; of giant men called Ewaipanoma, with mouths in their chests and eyes in their shoulders; and of Amazons who on the twelfth month of each year invited the lustiest warriors of neighboring tribes to stand on the borders of their territories while the damsels "cast lots for their valentines." The ladies then enjoyed their men for a month of feasting and love-making.

The rainy season came, and Sir Walter and his little band decided that they had had enough of hard boards and unsavory victuals. They returned to the ships in the estuary and sailed back to England with no gold in their pockets but with visions of paradise in their heads. When Raleigh came to write of his adventures - *The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana, with a Relation of the Great and Golden City of Manoa* - he captured for every European who could read the thrill of distant lands, the sense of adventure, and the hope of someday discovering El Dorado.

The surge of emotion that drove Englishmen from the comforts of their chimney seats to search "the most opposite corners and quarters of the world" was touched with something more than the love of adventure and the desire for gold. The New World was "a shelter and a hiding place" where men of humble origin could carve for themselves a new and better home. At first, the hope of planting a nation in the wilderness seemed unreal, part of the imaginary trappings of the unknown world. Such a vision had inspired More's *Utopia,* that philosopher's paradise where reason and wisdom reigned triumphant, and the ills, horrors, and inequalities of the sixteenth century made way for the perfect harmony of an orderly, if sterile, semi-communal state. Part spoof (the chamber pots were made of gold), part penetrating study into the social and psychological realities underlying human society, and part idealization of the medieval concept of a balanced, ordered, and integrated society, *Utopia* had a deep impact on the Tudor mind. Throughout the century, the idea persisted that somewhere in the New World a Utopia lay hidden, a haven and refuge from the troubles of the Old World.

Three men were responsible for the first efforts to transform such an aspiration into reality: Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who

died in his futile endeavor to colonize Newfoundland, Raleigh, and Richard Hakluyt, the propagandist who inspired all men with his magnificent collection of *Voyages.* From the start, America was seen as a way of skimming the "milk of bitterness" from England, and Gilbert and Raleigh sought to persuade nearly 100 English Catholics to leave their hearths for a new start in life. When many of the colonists - and later Sir Humphrey - drowned, Raleigh worked on alone, urging Englishmen "to take fast root and hold" 3,000 miles away from home. Of the imperial powers, only England succeeded in transplanting its people and establishing small, tough, and vital replicas of itself on the inhospitable shores and in the endless forests of an uncharted land. Spaniards went out by the thousands, but they sought gold to plunder and souls to save; Frenchmen ventured forth in far more conservative numbers to trade and trap along the St. Lawrence River; only the English sent out viable offshoots with men to toil, women to be fruitful, children to ensure the future, and laws by which to live. The achievement was a miracle of advertising: Financiers were persuaded to hazard capital on a long-term investment, and the industrious workman and the thrifty housewife were enticed to the supreme folly of risking all upon the fantasy of a better life. Religious hatred, economic privation, and fear of the gallows eventually drove a multitude from their homes, but the New World could never have been successfully populated by bitterness alone. The indispensable role of Raleigh and Hakluyt was first to show how not to plant a colony and then, with Hakluyt's book, to charm Elizabethan society with the romance of colonization.

In March 1584, Raleigh received one of those wonderfully self-assured charters issued by European sovereigns; the queen conferred upon him the authority "to discover barbarous countries, not actually possessed of any Christian prince and inhabited by Christian people, to occupy and enjoy the same for ever." Within a month, two ships were sent out to reconnoiter the southeastern coast of North America for a good location for a colony. Roanoke Island had no suitable harbor, but its shores were rich with grapes, and it seemed to be reasonably secure from the predatory Spanish. In August 1585, 107 colonists landed. From the start, the experiment was an unmitigated failure. The English were a scruffy lot of undisciplined ex-soldiers and incipient buccaneers in quest of easy money, and when they found little besides hard work

and virgin forests, they quickly lost heart. Most of their supplies had been spoiled at sea, and the landing had been made too late in the year to plant crops for the winter months. The settlers were thrown upon the generosity of the Indians, who had barely enough for themselves. When the natives refused to continue supplying food, relations deteriorated to the point of open war. Early in the history of America, whites evolved the theory that the only good Indian was a dead Indian. Raleigh had promised his settlers that new recruits and supplies would be sent out in March, but the promise was never kept; even if reinforcements had arrived on schedule, it is doubtful whether the colonists would have stayed on. They were without heart and without women, and when Drake, who had been pirating in the Caribbean, appeared at Roanoke in June 1586, the colonists seized the opportunity to flee back to the security of the Old World.

Raleigh was bitterly disappointed by his settlers, but astute enough to perceive the cause of their failure. The first experiment in colonization had been financed on a shoestring and manned by explorers and exploiters, not by men and women who had the strength and vision to toil in the red earth of Virginia. In a year, Sir Walter had raised the necessary capital and found the volunteers for a second attempt. This time he was determined to ship out women as well as men and to ensure their labor by offering each colonist 500 acres of land free and a voice in the affairs of the colony. One hundred fifty settlers made the two-month journey to Virginia and arrived in July 1587, to find the original fort burned and the Indians still resentful.

Eighty-nine men, seventeen women, and eleven children, under Governor John White, elected to make their homes on the ruins of the old settlement, and all 117 were to vanish forever. Raleigh had strained every financial nerve to supply his plantation, but even so, the colonists were critically short of the essentials of life. Within a month of their landing, they sent Governor White back to England to beg for seed and iron, livestock and cloth, and a multitude of other items necessary to transform a camp into an enduring community. Before White left, there seemed to be some possibility that the settlement might take root; at least an English child had been born in the New World, his granddaughter, Virginia Dare. But by the time he returned to Roanoke, nothing remained of the colony.

John White had sailed back to England to find Raleigh close to bankruptcy and the nation arming for the forthcoming clash with Spain. The fate of the colonists soon became a tragic by-product of the momentous struggle occurring in Europe, for there were no ships, arms, or men to send to Virginia. Raleigh already had invested 40,000 pounds in the Roanoke experiment and was obliged to transfer a portion of his rights and authority to a joint stock company of London merchants, who contracted, in no great haste, to send out a relief expedition. Impatient as he was, it was not until August 18, 1591, four years to the month later, that Governor White returned to Roanoke Island to be confronted with the ominous silence of the wilderness and the impenetrable mystery of what had happened to his colony. The fort still stood, but the houses and all their inhabitants had gone. There was one clue to their fate, part of a code decided upon before White sailed for England. A Maltese cross was to be cut into the wood of the stockade in case of peril, and a word was to be carved to indicate where the settlers might have fled. On one of the piles of the palisade was found the word *Croatoan,* on a tree were cut the letters *CRO,* but nowhere was there discovered a Maltese cross. The settlers had survived their first winter, for a Spanish frigate reported their existence in June 1588, but no hint remains of what terrible events occurred thereafter. Possibly, as the carved letters might indicate, the colony had moved to Croatoan Island or had gone to live with the Croatoan Indians. The most likely explanation, however, is that the settlers were surprised and massacred by Indians.

The tragedy of Roanoke was not without its blessings. One hundred seventeen men, women, and children had vanished, but their successors learned two vital lessons that would eventually ensure the success of the Jamestown colony: first, that colonization, in contrast to plundering and gold prospecting, was immensely costly, and no private individual could carry the burden alone; and second, that there was no real hope of discovering gold and gaining a quick profit in the areas that were open to English exploration. The settlers who followed after the disappearance of the Roanoke colony, and the merchants who joined in the stock companies to supply and maintain the new settlements did so with some, if not all, of the scales removed from their eyes. The settlement of the new continent was accomplished by realists who knew the

odds and were willing to accept the heartaches and the labor necessary to conquer and civilize the New World. Raleigh's labors ultimately bore fruit in 1607; both he and Hakluyt lived to see "an English nation" in North America.

The shock of discovery, of finding the world a different, and in some ways, a better place than the one imagined by classical and medieval authority, undoubtedly weakened the grip of the dead hand of custom. Novelty was in the air. Everywhere there were "new and rare observations," as men discovered for themselves a host of fresh wonders. Peter Martyr announced the existence of the New World in his *De orbe novo* in 1530; new theories of medicine were propounded by Paracelsus in 1526; a revolutionary book on diseases was issued in 1541 by Johannes Baptista de Cavigliolis; André Thévet published *Les singularités de la France antarctique* in 1557; William Gilbert's *New Philosophy of our Sublunary World* was written well before the author's death in 1603; and Englishmen marveled over Monardes's *Joyful News out of the New-found World* on the subject of botany. Discoveries in every area of human speculation led to questioning, and if need be, to the putting aside of ancient theories for newer ones, based on empirical evidence.

The new discoveries on earth were acclaimed even by a Church that somehow adapted the story of Adam and his expulsion from the Garden of Eden to the existence of human beings in the antipodes, who could not possibly be descendants of the original biblical man. But disturbing discoveries in the heavens and the recasting of God's domain were different matters, and when in 1543 Copernicus announced a new cosmology in *De revolutionibus orbiurn coelestium,* his ideas were dismissed as unsettling and silly. It was ridiculous, dangerous, and presumptuous, men believed, to argue that as massive a body as the earth, which was the center of God's universe, could rotate on its axis or hurtle in space around the sun.

The traditional view of the universe was too imposing, too deeply rooted in the most atavistic impulses of the human race to be denied. Not only did the wisest of classical philosophers vouch for the truth of the cosmos, not only was it proved by biblical evidence and by God's own voice speaking through His Church on earth but also man's every instinct and his own eyes told him that he was the central and

most important point, around which the heavenly bodies marched. The dark of a winter's night provided indisputable evidence that moon and sun, planet and stars, Milky Way and the entire celestial display rose and set around the earth. To the Elizabethan observing such wonders, it seemed clear and proper that he should be standing at the core of the universe and that heaven and earth should have been created as the setting for a divine drama in which man was destined to play the leading role as God's special creation. The authority of Aristotle and the word of Scripture confirmed what any simpleton could see for himself; only a tiny and suspect band of mathematicians agreed with John Donne that the "new philosophy calls all in doubt."

The much-acclaimed dogma that modern science is based on empirical data interpreted by reason is one of those uncritically treasured truisms that do nothing but befuddle the mind. The creed implies that old-fashioned Aristotelian science was without observation and was grounded on improbable hypotheses totally at odds with reason. Such an assumption is not only untrue, it also obscures the crucial point that many of the errors of Aristotelian science were rooted in observation and were based on too high a regard for what the eye sees and for what appears to be reasonable.

Classical cosmology was founded upon four assumptions that were derived from careful observation: the world of man had been composed of water, fire, air, and earth; the nature of all things is to remain at rest, and therefore what must be explained is movement and motion; the earth is stationary and the heavens are spherical and revolve about the earth every twenty-four hours. To this evidence of the senses, classical philosophy then added a number of suppositions about the nature of the universe: it was orderly, purposeful, and ultimately intelligible; it was finite and consisted of ether; there was a prime mover to account for celestial motion, and the physical principles that explained the actions of the firmament were not the same as those that operated on earth; and finally, the heavens were eternal and immutable, free of flux and decay.

Classical theory and observation produced a convincing picture of a universe, one that was easy to comprehend, made excellent sense, and above all else, was comfortably anthropomorphic in its assumptions. At all times, man was

assumed to be standing securely within an immense sphere, looking up from a central location at the inner surface of the firmament. All things were ultimately relative to a fixed point of observation - the human observer standing on a stationary earth.

Aristotelian philosophy explained the existence of change and corruption in the world by the commotion caused by the four terrestrial elements - earth, air, fire, and water - as each sought to find that location most satisfactory to its nature. Earth and water were forever attracted downward toward the center of the terrestrial globe; fire and air moved upward, aspiring to a higher and more perfect place in the heavens. Had the elements achieved their goals, the world would have died; it would have consisted of motionless and eternal layers of earth, ocean, air, and fire. But since the elements were mixed and constantly struggling to disentangle themselves, they produced change, violence, and decay on earth. Outside the world of man, a different set of physical properties operated, since the element of ether had achieved its harmonic and natural place. Like the layers of an onion, the firmament extended outward in a series of rotating, crystalline, ethereal spheres, to which were attached the various points of celestial geography. First came the circle of the moon, beyond which all was contentment, ageless and enduring. Next came the spheres of the two lesser planets, then that of the sun, followed by those of the three outer planets, and then the circle of the outer firmament, where, in endless incomprehensible numbers resided the fixed stars. Two more spheres remained, one classical, the other Christian: the invisible orb of the classical prime mover, which was thought to be the cause of all heavenly movement and the source of the music of the heavens; and even farther out, the empyrean, the abode of God and His heavenly hosts. There was scarcely an Elizabethan who had not been taught all or part of the Aristotelian cosmos, and long after Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo had destroyed forever the music of the spheres, educators were still indoctrinating young gentlemen with the ancient view of a geocentric universe.

The classical world had always assumed that the heavenly spheres, so filled with harmony and virtue, could affect the destinies of men. Fortune and fate resided in the stars, and not even the Elizabethan introduction of such highly active

and interfering inhabitants of the sidereal world as intelligence, potentates, dominations, cherubim, seraphim, angels, and archangels could deprive the classical cosmos of its influence in the affairs of man. If, argued Sir Walter Raleigh, God had given "virtues to springs and fountains, to cold earth, to plants and stones . . . why should we rob the beautiful stars of their working powers?" From time out of mind, astronomers had been astrologers, supporting their scientific labors with the profits earned by casting horoscopes and reading the message of the stars. The sixteenth century was a busy period for those versed in the interpretation of the heavenly movements, and the year of the Armada was regarded by astrologers in every capital of Europe as an ominous date. Even the most unskilled viewer of the skies could see that Saturn, Mars, and Jupiter were in prophetic conjunction; that such a combination should occur during a year in which two solar and two lunar eclipses were scheduled to take place made the portent all the more alarming to observers.

Such was the cosmic scheme of things, and to it, Elizabethans added the human conceit of believing that the celestial display had been created for their benefit. Man might live upon an earth that one sixteenth-century Frenchman described as being "so depraved and broken in all kind of vices and abominations that it seemeth to be a place that hath received all the filthiness and purgings of all other worlds and ages," but it was also evident that the heavens declared the glory of God and that the stars had been set in the skies "to adorn the world and delight the eyes of men." It was accepted by all that the sun, moon, and other stars had been ordained "for no other purpose but to serve the earth." The horse, it was said, had been "brought forth for the use of man"; the soil produced grain so that the horse might live and labor; and the skies had been instructed to water the grain. Any scientific wizard who denied such a satisfying and obvious totality of earth, man, God, and heavens was not just a fool but a dangerous fool, and Martin Luther voiced the common sentiment of all Europe when he said of Copernicus: "The fool will overturn the whole art of astronomy."

The Aristotelian fetters that held fast the sixteenth-century mind were so stout that even the greatest English medical scientist, William Harvey, confessed, after a lifetime of disproving classical medicine, that Aristotle "has always such

weight with me that I never think of differing from him inconsiderately." Such bonds could not be broken without a total revolution within the mind of man. Answers are determined by the questions asked, and before the old physics and astronomy could be displaced; men had to pose questions that were profoundly disturbing and darkly heretical. In the face of every accepted authority, a Pandora's box of doubt and inquiry had to be opened: What if motion were natural and rest had to be explained? What if the mental picture of a universe with the earth as its center was wrong? What if mankind did not look out from the middle but stood instead on the outside and looked in? What if the cosmos was not finite but infinite, with no center at all? What if the firmaments moved only because the earth rotated? And finally the most seditious question of them all: What if every celestial body were rushing through boundless space in a fashion describable only in terms relative to other moving objects? If such propositions were true, then where was certainty, where coherence? Where was man's God-given place of honor? Such questions did not come easily even to men of great genius, and the sixteenth-century scientist, though he had his moments of inspiration, was only human, a normal mixture of erudition, quackery, enthusiasm, and blindness.

Nowhere was the ambivalence that marked the transition from medieval to modern thought so apparent as in science. Sixteenth-century scientific truth was a strange composite of the old and new, chemistry and alchemy, astronomy and astrology, mathematics and numerology, medicine and magic, observation and sorcery. A bold mind might lift a corner of the curtain of ignorance and glimpse the truth, but the man who dismissed astrology as nonsense might himself be a helpless devotee of occultism and cabala. Paracelsus announced that "the sick should be the doctor's books," but he believed in the *electrum magicum* of charms and prescribed for his patients doses of ground-up jewels on the hypothesis that the more precious the stones, the more efficacious the remedy. Sixteenth-century doctors were, by modern standards, expensive and learned charlatans who talked knowingly about choleric and melancholic influences within the body and killed their clientele with "comfortable potions" of crabs' eyes, powdered human skulls, Egyptian mummy's dust, and live spiders. Yet the greatest sixteenth-

century surgeon, Ambroise Paré, for the first time made amputation an operation that the victim had a reasonable chance of surviving, and he was wise enough to say of his prowess as a doctor and a surgeon, "I treated him and God cured him." The distinguished mathematician Blaise de Vigenère argued that no one should "study the divinely beautiful proportions of numbers in order to make them serve the computation of a bank"; yet Thomas Digges, one of the most famous Englishmen versed in "cunning calculations," was an expert in ballistics and went to sea to put to a test his theories about compass variations.

Of all the scientific figures of the Elizabethan age, the most extraordinary example of intellectual brilliance combined with mental obtuseness was Doctor John Dee of Mortlake. That "arch conjuror of the whole kingdom" was the admired confidant of royalty, the adviser of mariners, the friend of the learned Dutch cartographer Gerard Mercator, the defender of Copernicus, the author of an imaginative and ambitious scheme to reorganize the English fishing industry, the queen's astrologer, and by his own confession, an unswerving believer in occultism, spirits, apocalyptic numbers, cabalistic formulas, and magic inscriptions. When a mutilated and stabbed wax effigy of Elizabeth was found in Lincoln's Inn Field, Doctor Dee assured his alarmed sovereign that the doll was the work of a silly and perverted mind. Nevertheless, the sage was so deeply committed to spiritualism that he maintained a private medium by the unlikely name of Edward Kelley, to whom he paid a yearly salary of fifty pounds. The good Doctor Dee was possessed of a magic mirror, a polished stone of mystic properties, and a "gazing table," which stood on a square of red silk, with each of its legs resting on a wax seal inscribed with sacred Hebrew letters.

The liberation of the human mind from superstitions, preconceptions, and traditional habits of thinking is such a painful and disturbing process that it is surprising that Kepler, Dee, Copernicus, and William Gilbert were not burned at the stake as was the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno. They escaped persecution primarily because they were the high priests of a mystery that few people understood. Copernicus's view of the universe may have been as clear as "sun beams" to Thomas Digges, who pronounced in 1576 the heliocentric system to be so self-evident that "any reasonable man that hath his understanding ripened with mathematical

demonstration" must accept it, but until well into the seventeenth century, *De revolutionibus* remained primarily the concern of trained scholars. Copernicus's mathematical hypotheses did not come to the attention of the public or most ecclesiastical authorities until they had been enlarged by Bruno, Kepler, and Galileo into a cosmic system of new and dangerous dimensions and un-Christian implications.

The first step of the new cosmology was built upon the weakest point of the old. Classical and medieval astronomers had long been aware that the planets did not behave with proper regard for a spherical, immutable, and harmonious universe. They traveled in a mystifying manner, usually moving in a stately and proper path from east to west across the sky, but occasionally turning about in a contrary fashion. Various theories were propounded to explain these bothersome celestial exceptions, but they all had one weakness in common: The mathematics required to explain such erratic movement was so elaborate that it contradicted the classical concept of a universe of marvelous simplicity and perfection.

Mathematicians found the planets - especially Mars - esthetically disturbing. Copernicus resolved the difficulty by turning to the assumption that the earth rotated and the sun was the center of the universe for reasons more esthetic than empirical. He based his new theory on esthetics as well as on mathematics. It seemed to him that the medieval mathematics of the heavens was too complex, and that symbolically the sun, as the source of all light, should hold the place of honor at the center of the universe. Copernicus could take the first giant stride of imagining an earth spinning in space and a sun around which all else revolved, but he could not jump the next intellectual hurdle and see that if the earth rotated, the crystalline spheres of the classical cosmos were unnecessary. Copernicus had lifted the curtain and peeked under it, but he continued to stand on the medieval side and view the heavens in traditional terms.

The heliocentric theory made a deep stir within the brotherhood of astronomers. In suggesting that the earth turned, Copernicus had concluded his argument with the statement: "You will find, if you think carefully, that these things occur in this way." In the second half of the sixteenth century, two sidereal events occurred that caused scientists

and laymen to think more carefully about the great astronomer's views and to reconsider their ideas of the structure of the universe. In 1572, a new star appeared in the skies, the first reported since the one that had shone over Bethlehem. For seventeen lunar months, it blazed so brightly that it could be seen even in daylight. Then it vanished as mysteriously as it had arrived. Astrologers, clerics, philosophers, and kings were thrown into confusion, for surely such a brilliant sign betokened some extraordinary event in the affairs of man: the death of Elizabeth, the outbreak of the plague, the approach of war.

What, in fact, the new celestial body did foretell was the demise of classical astronomy, for anyone could now perceive that the star was located in a sphere of the heavens that, by classical and medieval reckoning, should have been sublime and immutable and contain no such alien body. Five years later, another exception to classical cosmology put in an appearance and presented further proof that the firmaments were themselves capable of change and corruption. In 1577, a comet raced across the sky in an area where no comet should have been.

Slowly the old concept of rigid and immutable crystalline spheres, complete with heavenly music, was set aside. When Thomas Digges saw the star of 1572, he announced that he now hoped to "discern by exact judgment whether the earth lies quiet and immovable in the center of the world." He was disappointed, for no one could give visual evidence that the earth moved, and no one could think of any kind of sidereal motion except a circular one. An extraordinary mind, such as Giordano Bruno's, was capable of an imaginative leap into space and of conceiving of an infinite universe that possessed countless worlds and incarnations of Christ; but Bruno's *De I'infinito universo e mondi* was condemned almost the moment it was published in 1584, and the author was burned at the stake for the grossest kind of heresy in 1600. Until the seventeenth century, scientific evidence weighed against Copernicus. If an immensely heavy earth really did rotate at 1,000 miles an hour, then an object dropped from a high cliff should land well to the west of its starting point, and a cannonball should carry farther when shot in a westerly direction than when pointed toward the east. Moreover, if the world moved about the sun, then the fixed stars should move slightly, relative to the earth's position on either side of the

sun. The stars remained constant, cannonballs refused to cooperate, and stones dropped from towers gave no indication that the earth rotated.

It was not until Johannes Kepler broke through the sixteenth century's mystical preoccupation with spherical motion, and Galileo Galilei expounded the doctrine of inertia, that the map of the heavens was rewritten, and religious authority rose up in alarm. The stumbling block to Copernicus's heliocentric theory lay in the fact that the mathematics required to describe the circular movement of the planets about the sun was almost as intricate as that of the old system, which used the earth as its center. In proving an elliptical orbit for the planets, Kepler brought to the heliocentric cosmos the great advantage of mathematical elegance and simplicity. Galileo did much the same thing for medieval astrophysics. The weightiest argument in favor of Aristotle's theory of crystalline spheres had been that it accounted for heavenly motion and gave a plausible explanation of why celestial bodies remained forever in the skies. Galileo liberated the sixteenth century from the myth that an object will move only when impelled by the continuing force of a prime mover. He advanced the theory that motion, not rest, was normal and that all heavenly elements moved in orbit at a speed that was relative to their original impetus.

Although the modern concept of inertia and motion did not receive its final formulation until the time of Newton, the cosmology described by Galileo and Kepler was already depriving God of an active part in its operation. The universe was becoming a perfectly ordered but quite mechanical clock, created by a benevolent deity who was satisfied with the role of celestial mechanic and impetus-giver. In 1610, a year after Galileo first used his telescope to see for himself evidence of phenomena that already had been mathematically expounded, Sir Henry Wotton wrote to James I a letter even more skeptical than the one Spain's court historian had written on Columbus's return from the New World. He had, he said, "the strangest piece of news" to report: "The mathematical professor of Padua" had discovered four new planets rolling about the sphere of Jupiter, besides many other unknown fixed stars." Also the Italian astronomer had viewed the moon and found it not to be "spherical but endued with many prominences, and, which is of all the strangest, illuminated with the solar light by reflection from the body of

the earth." The author of these wonders, concluded Sir Henry, "runneth a fortune to be either exceedingly famous or exceedingly ridiculous."

Few Elizabethans before 1600 had passed far enough over the threshold of modernity to conceive of the new and godless cosmos of endless space and mechanical motion as anything but ridiculous, but in every field of human observation the veil of myth was being drawn back. In morality, Sir Francis Bacon was writing that his century "was much beholden to Machiavelli and others that wrote what men do, and not what they ought to do." In the study of history, Sir Walter Raleigh was ready to remove God from the formula. "To say that God was pleased to have it so," he said, "were a true but an idle answer (for his secret will is the cause of all things). . . . Wherefore we may boldly look into the second causes" and understand history in terms of human motivation. In politics, Sir Thomas More voiced in *Utopia* the proposition that the commonwealth should be designed to help the people lead "happy lives." In charity, rich merchants gave more to benefit education than to ensure their souls' salvation. In science, men were wondering with Galileo whether God really had "designed so many vast, perfect, and noble celestial bodies . . . to no other use but to serve this passible, frail, and mortal earth?" If the theological justification for the heavens was doubtful, might not the ultimate heresy be correct after all? The universe might not have been created as a backdrop for the drama of man's salvation, but as a kingdom to be conquered and ruled by man's intelligence. The destiny of man, said Francis Bacon, was "to extend the power and dominion of the human race over the universe." Human happiness, scientific usefulness, a mechanical cosmos, all these, as Pascal complained, had turned God into a first cause who "set the world in motion by a twist of his finger and thumb," and who thereafter left the universe to man's tender mercies and ruthless exploitation.

Steadily the face of Gloriana's England changed. It was not so much that the features became, with each passing year, more Jacobean than Elizabethan; the metamorphosis was more profound and enduring than that. Imperceptibly, the scientific mind, the secular frame of reference, and the mechanical concept of the universe appeared, like an ugly stepdaughter, unwanted but always present. The medieval profile receded; the image of modern man with his self-confidence and his

mania for definitions and categories began to emerge. Men of imagination breathed the intoxicating scent of change and announced with Jean Fernel that "our age is doing today things of which antiquity did not dream," but most Europeans were unaware of where questioning and doubt were leading. Elizabeth would have been as shocked as the cardinals of the Roman Church by Bruno's pantheistic and infinite universe. Her age may have been edging out of the feudal past, but the queen herself remained what she had always been - no modern, but the greatest Elizabethan of them all. Gloriana had always detested newfangledness; she liked her society and her heavens to be orderly, anthropomorphic, and solidly divine. Although the world was passing the old lady by, she was not yet dead; such was her magic that history seemed almost to have slowed down to wait for Elizabeth to leave the stage. Yet before she turned England and Europe over to James of Scotland and Henry of Navarre, to Galileo and Montaigne, and to the harbingers of intellectual inquiry and political revolution, she had a few medals left to display.

XI

END OF AN ERA

Elizabeth was growing old, and not even the removal of the mirrors from her rooms could change the truth: She and all her generation were mortals "whom time had surprised." There is a story, "credibly reported," that not long before her death the queen had a "great apprehension of her own age" when she saw her face, "then lean and full of wrinkles, truly represented to her in a glass." Gloriana was suddenly overcome with the awful knowledge of how often she had been "abused by flatterers" who had "informed her the contrary." As age crept silently into court, management and artifice, rouge pot and wig became all the more essential to her reign. Pageantry and adoration, pomp and stateliness stood alone, devoid of the lighthearted gaiety and exuberance with which the young princess had mounted the throne. There were still moments when the queen could conjure up the spirit of those earlier days. At the age of sixty-six, she danced the pavan to the sound of a pipe and tabor, but she did so in the privacy of her closet, "none being with her but my Lady Warwick." Her tongue remained as sharp as ever, her laughter as cutting, and her anger as majestic. When in front of the entire court the Polish ambassador criticized her policy toward Spain and threatened war, she stormed at him in impromptu Latin, so vital and colorful that all England delighted in the ambassador's discomfort and their queen's brilliance.

After four decades, the charm still worked, and her people continued to talk of "her mind of gold, her body of brass"; but with each passing year Elizabeth depended more and more on artful staging to achieve her effect. As the queen's face became wrinkled, and her body grew stiff, ceremony waxed all the more lavish. Her table, reported a foreign traveler in 1598, was set out with carefully arranged solemnity. "A gentleman entered the room bearing a rod, and along with him another who had a tablecloth, which, after they had both kneeled three times with the utmost veneration, he spread upon the table, and after kneeling again, they both retired. Then came two others, one with the rod again, the other with a saltcellar, a plate, and bread; when they had kneeled as the others had done and placed what was brought upon the table, they too retired with the same ceremonies performed by the first. At last came an unmarried lady (we were told she was a countess) and along with her a married one, bearing a tasting knife; the former was dressed in white silk, who, when she

had prostrated herself three times in the most graceful manner, approached the table and rubbed the plates with bread and salt, with as much awe as if the queen had been present: when they had waited there a little while, the yeomen of the guard entered, bareheaded, clothed in scarlet, with a golden rose upon their backs, bringing in at each turn a course of twenty-four dishes, served in plate, most of it gilt; these dishes were received by a gentleman in the same order they were brought, and placed upon the table, while the lady-taster gave to each of the guards a mouthful to eat, of the particular dish he had brought, for fear of any poison."

During the tasting and laying out of the meal, "twelve trumpets and two kettledrums made the hall ring for half an hour together. At the end of this ceremonial a number of unmarried ladies appeared, who, with particular solemnity, lifted the meat off the table and conveyed it into the queen's inner and most private chamber, where, after she had chosen for herself, the rest goes to the ladies of the court. The queen dines and sups alone, with very few attendants; and it is very seldom that anybody, foreigner or native, is admitted at that time."

Elizabeth supped alone with her memories while her people made do with ceremony. Old Burghley was content that it should be so, for he had been arranging the pomp and circumstance for as many years as Gloriana herself had reigned. The queen knew her servant's worth and her own indebtedness. In his final sickness, she came to his bedside to feed him with her own princely hand, and the old man was so moved that he told his son that in heaven he hoped to continue to be "a servitor for her and God's Church." There were, however, younger men who were not so willing to serve God by bowing low before a bejeweled and bewigged virgin queen, whose harried worshipers never knew from one day to the next whether she fancied herself as a coquette or a schoolmistress. The time for change was approaching, and Lord Burghley's death on August 4, 1598, at the age of seventy-eight, was the signal for a new generation to begin a struggle for English political power.

Two men bid for the old Lord Treasurer's powers and titles and looked ahead to a day when Elizabeth must step down and her cousin from Scotland sit in majesty upon the English throne. One was Burghley's second son, Robert Cecil; the

other was the Earl of Essex. Even the most wanton of the gods might have hesitated to arrange so uneven an encounter. In 1598, Essex was thirty-two, Cecil thirty-five; one had been trained as a peacock of the court and was obsessed with the vanity of his species, the other had been carefully and lovingly educated by his father in the art of government. Robert Cecil had been a member of Parliament at twenty-one, had been sent on a diplomatic mission at twenty-five, admitted to the Privy Council at twenty-eight, and at thirty-three made principal secretary, a post he had already been administering without title for more than five years. In a world that jibed cruelly at his hunchback and his spindly legs, Cecil made his way partly by his father's influence but more by his own industry. Almost alone of the second generation, he could match his sovereign's attention to detail. There were few secrets that the Cecils, father and son, did not possess; there was little stirring at court or elsewhere in the land to which they were not privy; but both Cecils were content to operate in the shadows, to exalt the cult of royalty, and to possess the substance of power behind the glitter of a goddess-queen. Burghley, her "Spirit," and Robert Cecil, her "Pygmy," had been indispensable to Gloriana's reign, and she knew it.

In contrast, Essex was loved, pampered, and treasured, but he was always expendable, and this Elizabeth also knew. Not all the vitality of his youth nor the virtuosity of his Renaissance heritage could altogether obscure an ugly egotism, made doubly sinister by the presence of deep-rooted baronial pride. Essex claimed power as his due, as his forefathers had done, because he had been born to the ermine; he was an earl and one of the natural leaders of society. But joined to anachronistic feudal pretension was a more dangerous quality: He demanded a place beside his queen because he was Essex, a hero, and a man. Etiquette required that he dance attendance upon a goddess and mouth the formula that transformed a capricious and crusty old woman into a semi-deity. No one knew better than the irresistible earl how to speak to perfection words that in his secret heart he denied: "When Your Majesty thinks that heaven is too good for me, I will not fall like a star, but be consumed like a vapor by the same sun that drew me up to such a height."

Elizabeth was too much a realist to judge her courtiers by

their honeyed phrases, but she believed in artifice, and she knew her authority to be of God. She could swallow her anger as a woman and forgive her handsome Essex his melancholic brooding and petulant outbursts, but when he publicly questioned her divinity as a queen in 1598, and announced that he could see upon the throne of majesty only an aging and cankered female whose mind was "as crooked as her carcass," then he passed beyond the pale and committed a crime not just against her sex but against "God's immediate minister on earth." "Those who touch the scepters of princes," she warned, "deserve no pity."

As long as Burghley lived, the conflict between Essex and Cecil was contained. Essex glittered at court and sought to satisfy his thirst for honor and popularity by feats of heroism at Cadiz and in the Azores; Cecil remained discreetly behind the scenes, "with his hands full of papers and his mind full of matter." Early on, a pattern began to emerge, one that augured ill for the unstable earl and drove him to ever-greater acts of frenzy. Essex could touch Gloriana's heart but never her mind. He could block Cecil's advance so long as he remained close to the queen, but the moment he left for adventures upon the high seas, Elizabeth quietly gave political office to his rival. While Essex strutted before the walls of Rouen, Cecil was placed on the Privy Council; when in 1596, Essex was off in search of military laurels at Cadiz, Cecil was made principal secretary. By 1598, it was painfully clear that the Earl of Essex was gaining all the honors, and Sir Robert Cecil was winning all the offices. It was bad enough that the queen should have rewarded hard-working Cecil, but it was even worse when she honored Charles Howard, Essex's old military rival, by naming him the Earl of Nottingham. The new title plus his office of Lord Admiral gave Howard precedence over Essex. Enraged and mortified that his queen could possibly recognize military service in someone other than himself, Essex sulked, feigned sickness, and refused to appear at court until Elizabeth had rectified such an insult to his honor. On December 18, 1597, she gave in and named him the earl marshal, the highest military post in her power to give.

Essex was pleased; his honor had been satisfied, and his rank sustained. Elizabeth had acceded to his demand, and that was only proper since she was a woman, and he was a man. But as always, Essex had no sense of proportion and no idea

when to stop. He insisted that all men should be either with him or against him. He never realized that parties did not belong to him but to the queen, and he wrote one of Elizabeth's foremost soldiers, Lord Thomas Grey, to demand that he present his colors and declare himself to be a friend or an enemy. When Grey refused to commit himself, Essex bluntly reminded him that he would do well to remember that the earl marshal controlled all military promotions. In answer, Lord Grey posed an issue that Elizabeth could not long ignore. The queen, he said, could not permit men of the sword to owe their advancement to the whim of a party leader and court favorite. If she did, she would endanger her throne, and her faithful nobility would "languish under the despised yoke of one of their own rank." The truth of Grey's observation became apparent in 1598 when the queen and Essex clashed over the appointment of a lord deputy for Ireland.

Trouble had been brewing in Ireland for more than a decade, and strong military action was required in that graveyard of English reputations, but no one wanted the post of lord deputy or the chance to rescue English honor. Elizabeth favored Essex's uncle, Sir William Knollys. The earl urged the appointment of his old enemy, Sir George Carew. The queen grew weary of Essex's pleading and angrily told him to have done with it. In a fury of contempt, he turned his back on his sovereign and received a box on the ear for his discourtesy and the order to "get him gone and be hanged." At that moment, Essex lost what little self-control he possessed, and his hand reached for his sword. Nottingham stepped between prince and subject, and Essex, in a blind rage, stormed out of the Presence chamber. Wiser and more dispassionate heads reminded him that "there is no contesting between sovereignty and obedience," but Essex would have none of it. "I owe Her Majesty," he said, "the duty of an earl and of Lord Marshal of England. . . . What! Cannot princes err? Cannot subjects receive wrong? Is an earthly power or authority infinite? Pardon me, pardon me, my good lord; I can never subscribe to these principles." The mirror of majesty had been smashed. The principle that would one day pull monarchs by the dozens from their thrones, and for which, in later centuries, men the world over would gladly die, unexpectedly appeared in the unpleasant mouth of a fatuous sixteenth-century egotist.

Matters between the queen and her difficult earl were patched

up when he fell ill in September 1598, but reconciliation failed to bring a respite in the jungle warfare of court politics. With Burghley dead, trouble immediately broke out over the inheritance of the old man's most coveted and lucrative office, Master of the Wards. Essex felt that he must have it, both for honor's sake and to save himself from bankruptcy. As early as 1589, scarcely two years after his arrival at court, he was at least 22,000 pounds in debt. On the Earl of Leicester's death, he had been granted the income from the customs of imported sweet wines and had been able to borrow heavily on the strength of this, but his household was steadily growing in size and expense, and his political influence depended on his ability to place his friends at court and in his own house. Control of the Court of Wards provided immense patronage and wealth, and the moment Burghley died, a would-be guardian to a rich orphan wrote Essex: "I pray that we may hear that you are Master of the Wards, for then I shall hope that you will bestow a male or female upon me." The queen's solution was, as usual, to take no irrevocable step; she delayed and presented the prized office to no one, telling the earl she would be her own master.

Deprived of one of the richest plums of political life, Essex did the expected: He wrote the queen a hot, almost threatening letter, demanding that she "think again" of his suit, and when she continued to refuse him, he announced that he deemed it "the fairer choice to command armies than honors." He forced Elizabeth and the Council to select him as lord deputy of Ireland, where Hugh O'Neill, the Earl of Tyrone, was successfully harrying the English out of the land.

For most Elizabethans, Ireland was a damp, disease-ridden bog of barbarism into which the English poured men and money without profit. In 1596, the queen had sent 3,500 soldiers to fight; within a year, 2,500 were "either dead, run away, or converted into Irish." For much of her reign, the Irish clans disliked one another so ferociously that they had little time to hate the English and less occasion to unite against them, but in 1593, Ireland found in Tyrone something approaching a national leader. Tyrone's rebellion was serious, but to make matters worse, behind him stood the Spanish, always waiting, always hoping that Ireland would become Elizabeth's Dutch ulcer.

Into this land of rebellious clans, where witches and

unseasonable weather abounded, marched the Earl of Essex with the strongest force Elizabeth had ever sent into Ireland - 16,000 foot soldiers and 1,300 horsemen at a cost of 1,000 pounds a day. Everything depended on success. As one observer cautiously put it: "If the lord deputy performs in the field what he hath promised in the Council, all will be well; but though the queen hath granted forgiveness for his late demeanor in her presence, we know not what to think hereof." If Elizabeth was providing her Essex with enough rope to hang himself, she must have been well satisfied with the results. In early April 1599, he set out with carefully drawn plans to attack Tyrone in his Ulster fastness. Moreover, he had stringent orders from the queen not to promote the Earl of Southampton, his worthless crony, to the post of second-in-command as Master of Horse, and to use his authority to create knights only with discretion. Instead of searching out Tyrone, Essex went off on a series of wild goose chases into Leinster and Munster, which cost thousands of men to no purpose except the capture of a decrepit Irish castle "from a rabble of rogues." Instead of destroying Tyrone, he negotiated peace with him, and to make matters still worse, he made Southampton Master of Horse and lavishly bestowed knighthood on thirty-eight henchmen with little to recommend them except their loyalty to Essex.

As might be expected, Elizabeth was furious, but she was also frightened by conduct that smelled of treason. In letter after letter, the sting of her invective lashed at her deputy. Why had nothing been accomplished after so many loud boasts and so great a financial effort? "If sickness of the army be the reason, why was not the action undertaken when the army was in better state? If winter's approach, why were the summer months of July and August lost? If the spring were too soon, and the summer that followed otherwise spent, if the harvest that succeeded were so neglected as nothing hath been done, then surely we must conclude that none of the four quarters of the year will be in season for you . . ." The miserable Essex sat in his tent and complained that nothing came from England except discomforts and "soul's wounds." He had cause to feel bitter; ridiculous failure confronted him in Ireland, and behind his back, the queen had given the mastership of the Court of Wards to Robert Cecil.

At what point treason actually entered Essex's mind is difficult to say. Possibly the notion had been lying dormant ever since

he dared deny the divinity of kings. Still more probably he spoke treason when he and Tyrone secretly discussed terms of peace. At any event, he decided to throw caution to the wind and return to England at the head of 3,000 men. Even in rebellion, however, Essex was too egotistical to be successful.

Instead of arriving at court with an army to give weight to his treason, he chose to travel with only a select company to guard him from arrest, and he depended on his fatal charm to confound his enemies and renew the queen's love. He sought only to exercise his male prerogative to rule over womankind and to demand his historic due as the barons of Runnymede had required of King John, but, as he sadly confessed, he spoke either "a language that was not understood or to a goddess not at leisure to hear prayers." When, on the morning of September 28, 1599, he strode unannounced and covered with filth into the queen's chamber at Nonsuch Palace, he encountered a goddess who was in no mood to hear prayers spoken by a subject teetering on the brink of treason. For once, Elizabeth was caught totally unprepared, with the adornments of her divinity and the trappings of her vanity put aside. Had Essex found a queen attired in regal splendor and not a wrinkled old woman without her wig or makeup, the meeting might have been more dramatic. As it was, the disobedient earl thought he had again won the day, for the queen was strangely quiet and deceptively gracious. Not until she had donned the accoutrements of royalty, put on the face of a queen, and talked at length with Robert Cecil did the storm descend, and Essex called upon to explain his insubordination.

As the days passed, Gloriana's anger increased, and she recalled Lord Grey's warning. "By God's son!" she stormed, "I am no queen; that man is above me. Who gave him command to come here so soon? I did send him on other business." Essex was imprisoned two days after his return, but the Council hesitated to bring him to public trial. He was the darling of the London rabble and the leader of a dangerous band of impecunious soldiers, disappointed office seekers, disgruntled noblemen, and lawless and landless knights of his own creation - in fact, of all the outcasts of Tudor society whom the queen had been unable to charm by her artistry or satisfy by her patronage. The walls of Tudor popularity were being assaulted for the first time since the uprising of the northern earls in 1569, and cautious councilors

urged Elizabeth to curb her fury and cancel the trial. Against her better judgment, she allowed Essex to escape the consequences of his idiocy, but it was clear that she had neither forgotten nor forgiven, and she turned a deaf ear to "shaming, languishing, despairing Essex" and his pleas to be allowed to return to court. Gloriana had learned that "affection is false," and in September 1600, she forced into the open the treason that she knew still lay within an unrepentant heart. She refused to renew the earl's lease of the customs on sweet wines, and Essex's entire financial structure collapsed, forcing him to gamble all on an act of political madness.

Nemesis had long withheld her hand, but from November on, she moved swiftly to prove the truth that "character is man's fate." By the time Essex had turned to open treason, the deterioration in his character had passed beyond the point of hysteria; it was bordering on an insanity that led him to confuse the fantasies of his own sick brain with reality. "He shifteth from sorrow and repentance to rage and rebellion so suddenly," reported Sir John Harington, "as well proveth him devoid of good reason or of right mind." Essex's house was turned into an arsenal and the headquarters for rebellion, and early on February 8, he and Southampton, with a company of 200 henchmen, rode into the city to raise the apprentices with the cry: "For the queen! A plot is laid for my life!" A few of the citizenry cheered, but no one stirred, and when a royal herald proclaimed Essex to be a traitor, his own following began to melt away. The throngs watched but made no move to help their darling Essex, the victor of Cadiz, and by evening the farce had been played out. Essex's Sunday parade was over, his senseless rebellion dead, and retribution swift and decisive.

On February 7, Essex and his colleague Southampton were brought from the Tower to appear before a jury of their peers. For a time, the earl's dark pride and obsession with honor sustained him. At his trial, he was magnificently scornful, and like Mary of Scotland, his dramatic instinct was superb. When Raleigh was sworn in as a witness against him, Essex wanted to know: "What booteth it to swear the fox?" To the court, he proudly disdained to speak: "To save my life, for that I see were vain: I owe God a death." Essex persistently denied he had been disloyal or "ever wished to be of higher degree than a subject," but the evidence against

him was overwhelming. It was manifest to the court, as Cecil remarked, that the earl had "a wolf's head in a sheep's garment," and Tudor society agreed with Francis Bacon when he said of Essex's behavior: "Will any man be so simple as to take this to be less than treason?" When the terrible sentence was read - "to be laid on a hurdle and so drawn to the place of execution, and there to be hanged, cut down alive, your members to be cut off and cast into the fire, your bowels burnt before you, your head smitten off, and your body quartered and divided" - Essex answered that he thought it only fitting that his "poor quarters, which have done Her Majesty true service in diverse parts of the world, should now at the last be sacrificed and disposed of at Her Majesty's pleasure." Again, however, Essex was posing; he knew full well that his mistress would never expose him, to such an indignity. The hangman would be cheated, and he would die as became his rank, by the ax.

Elizabeth had won the battle, and in the end she won the war, for Essex's defiance did not long withstand the teaching of a lifetime: "He that nameth rebellion, nameth . . . the whole puddle and sink of all sins against God and man." Conceit had brought him to such a pass, and every Christian knew that unrepentant pride must inevitably lead to eternal damnation in the fires of hell. Before the day of execution, Essex made confession of his faults, and when he faced his executioner on February 25, 1601, he did so "in humility and obedience," and prostrated himself before his "deserved punishment." A "nature not to be ruled" had finally been tamed.

With Essex's passing, something disappeared from England and from Elizabeth's life. The ramparts of Tudor popularity held firm; the queen had triumphed, but the Essex tragedy had clearly shown that the cult of a virgin queen could not forever satisfy all manner of men and that Elizabeth's system of government was not immune to attack. The queen never really got over Essex's treason or his disloyal words about her mind and heart being "as crooked as her carcass." Sir John Harington reported in October 1601, that "the many evil plots and designs have overcome all Her Highness' sweet temper. She walks much in her privy chamber, and stamps with her feet at ill news, and thrusts her rusty sword at times into the arras in great rage." Still later, he described her as "reduced to a skeleton, altered in her features" and even "her taste for dress gone." It was pathetically clear that Gloriana felt

"creeping time" at her gate.

More and more, the queen remembered what used to be and grieved for it. Old, sightless Blanche Parry, who had rocked the princess in her cradle, died in 1590. Leicester, her "Robin," had already gone, and soon stiff, hard-working Walsingham and Chancellor Christopher Hatton, her "Mutton," would face their turn. Knox and Calvin, Drake, Hawkins, and Essex, Catherine de Médicis and Henry III of France, William of Orange and Suleiman the Magnificent, Ivan the Terrible of Russia and Mary Stuart of Scotland -Elizabeth outlived them all. Even the oldest of her enemies, Philip of Spain, died in 1598, in the forty-second year of his reign. When the bells of the Escorial tolled their message of grief, they rang out an era that both Elizabeth and Philip had known and respected: a century of divine-right monarchs and paternalistic governments, when men still paid respect to the fiction of religious unity and dressed their thoughts and motives in proper Christian platitudes.

Internationally the old and well-understood configurations were passing. Spain remained a great power, but by the time of Philip's death, Spanish belief in miracles was sadly shaken, and the old crusading zeal was so dim that most Spaniards were ready to make peace with the heretic Jezebel in England and to accept Dutch independence. Pride, not religious conviction, kept the war alive, and within a decade of the king's death, it was clear that Spain could no longer afford to maintain its honor. Peace with England in 1604 and with the Dutch in 1609 were the inevitable consequences of economic and spiritual exhaustion. Spain's misfortunes were, as Philip had sadly explained, partly the work of God who had granted him many kingdoms without "a son fit to govern them," but the blame rested as much with Philip as with his worthless heirs. His empire was withering away from within. The silver and gold of the New World stayed just long enough to inflate the economy and destroy Spanish industry before passing into the pockets of heretical Dutch merchants, who supplied Philip's fleets with the hemp and tar of the Baltic and the salt herring that his Hieronymite monks ate on fast days. Philip had inherited a kingdom richly diverse in culture and tradition, and like Elizabeth, he sought the unity of his realm, but the final irony of his reign was that he succeeded too well and finally imposed an intellectual and spiritual straitjacket on his subjects. In 1598, Spain still looked impressive, but

intellectual and economic sclerosis was already well advanced. Wealth and confidence were moving northward to the Netherlands, and the weight of military power was slowly shifting to France.

The tides that flowed into the estuaries of the Dutch coast carried on their crest the riches of the entire globe, and merchant princes in their counting houses stood knee-deep in gold. At Amsterdam, the acquisitive spirit was permitted full rein; the economic freedom to buy and sell without regard to religious belief, state policy, social welfare, or the soul's salvation gave the city a position unequaled in Europe. The Dutch provinces could send out 10,000 ships and more men-of-war than England and Scotland combined, and at least half those sails made their port on the Amstel River. Antwerp died, but Amsterdam flourished; the southern provinces bled, but the northern cities prospered; and baffled observers noted the strange riddle of the beleaguered Dutch towns and ports: "It is known to all the world that whereas it is generally the nature of war to ruin land and people, these countries on the contrary have been noticeably improved thereby."

In 1600, it seemed to many Elizabethans that the junior partner in the war against Spain had gained the most profit from the decline of Spanish sea power and had taken to heart Raleigh's advice that "whosoever commands the sea, commands the trade; whosoever commands the trade of the world, commands the riches of the world, and consequently the world itself." While famine, inflation, and commercial recession plagued Elizabeth's England, and dreary guerrilla warfare in Ireland absorbed its revenues, Dutch merchant princes waxed fat on the profits of both war and peace. The Netherlands stood on the threshold of fifty years of economic and cultural pre-eminence, a golden age in which Amsterdam would be rechristened the "crowned Queen of Europe."

In France, the shape of the future was evident to those who could discern the realities of international power. By 1600, a new Bourbon dynasty under Henry IV was recasting and revitalizing the land. When the last Valois, Henry III, was stabbed at St. Cloud on the morning of August 1, 1589, the first reaction had been shock that God could have permitted such a deed and could have turned the kingdom over to a heretic. But that reaction was quickly followed by an angry determination that Henry of Navarre should never live to

make good his claim. Followers of the dead monarch vowed that they "would die a thousand deaths" before accepting Henry IV as king.

At thirty-five, the new King of France dubbed himself "a king without a country, a soldier without money, a husband without a wife." Like Elizabeth Tudor, Henry was a master of the well-turned phrase, but his situation was not quite as desperate as he mockingly portrayed it. As a king, time and history were his indispensable allies. The exhaustion of over thirty years of intermittent war eventually silenced even the most vocal bigot and salved the most tender conscience, and despite papal excommunication and Satan's blessings, his claim to the throne remained inviolate. No one had a better right to the Valois crown than Henry of Navarre. Nor was he a soldier totally without resources. The Catholic League might have the consecrated banners of the pope to sustain its candidate for king and the gold of Spain to pay its armies, but Henry had Valois and Capetian blood in his veins and English silver in his pockets. Only the final witticism was true: He was, indeed, a husband without a wife. His marriage to Margaret Valois, in 1572, had proved to be the preliminary to the blood bath of St. Bartholomew's Day, and their connubial life continued to be as tumultuous as its start, vacillating wildly among bouts of sensuous reconciliation, mutual promiscuity, and bitter recriminations.

Henry IV is as much a legend as Elizabeth - viewed by posterity as the savior of his realm, an apostle of sanity, reason, and tolerance, the architect of French greatness, a benevolent and patriotic king who sought the welfare of the peasantry and the prosperity of the commercial classes, and above all, a royal lover from whose lusty caresses no woman was safe. As with Elizabeth, the myth becomes the historical figure; Henry hardly exaggerated when, toward the close of his life, he wrote: "France is deeply indebted to me, for I worked hard for it!" Certainly he labored long to outwit Philip of Spain, foil the fanatical designs of the Catholic League, and secure his throne. The great strength of the League was that it represented all good Catholics who were horrified at the thought of a Protestant monarch; its great weakness was its dependence upon Spanish money and troops and its bafflement over who would be the legitimate sovereign if Henry were barred from lawful inheritance. As long as Cardinal Bourbon, Henry's Catholic uncle, lived, the cardinal

could legitimately be recognized as Charles X, but when he died in May 1590, the League was torn apart by contending candidates. Fat Charles, the Duke of Mayenne, brother of the murdered Henry of Guise and leader of the League, aspired to the throne. Philip of Spain, however, planned to bestow the crown upon Isabella Clara Eugenia, his daughter by Elizabeth Valois, and Mayenne never dared push his own claims too hard since he was dependent on Spanish arms and money in the struggle against Henry of Navarre.

For four years, France endured a war in which there seemed to be no possible solution. Isabella Eugenia was unacceptable because she was Spanish, Mayenne had little support because he was a Guise, and Henry of Navarre was detested because he was a Protestant. At first it appeared as if God, after all, might be on the side of legitimacy when Henry IV's starving, ill-paid, and desperate little army routed Mayenne's superior force at the battle of Ivry in 1590, but without the capture of Paris, no victory was complete, and the city withstood a siege of four hellish months and remained stubbornly and violently Catholic. The aristocratic and commercial classes of the city might have capitulated, but the rabble, who suffered most, were strongest in their determination to resist a heretic king even unto death. Monks and priests, 1,300 strong, donned breastplates and helmets and marched the streets as a sign that the spiritual sword of Christ was not without its fighting edge. As the months slipped by, dogs, cats, even rats began to disappear from the cellars and alleys of Paris, sacrifices to the city's determination to remain alive and to add a little variety to a diet of oatmeal and water. Grim stories were reported as hundreds starved and died. Flour for bread, it was said, was mixed with human bones, and other cases of cannibalism were suspected; the revolutionary Council of Sixteen announced that it was preferable in God's eyes to eat children than to recognize an apostate monarch.

Just when it seemed as if the city must surrender, the Duke of Parma came to its rescue and marched his invincible Spanish legions out of Brussels to relieve the siege of Paris. Fanatical Catholics gave thanks with a solemn *Te Deum*, but artisans and peasants, moderates and skeptics, and the party of the politique wondered whether such a miraculous eleventh-hour reprieve was worth the price of three more years of bloodshed and confusion. Henry of Navarre, for all his flamboyant courage, was no military match for Parma,

and Paris remained adamantly determined never to accept a Protestant sovereign. The Catholic League was paralyzed by quarreling within its own ranks when Mayenne and the left-wing Council of Sixteen clashed over the leadership of the League and the control of Paris. Philip II annoyed his Catholic supporters by sending as his representative the Duke of Feria, undoubtedly the most tactless diplomat of the sixteenth century, and antagonized all Frenchmen by putting historians to work to prove that France's cherished Salic law, limiting succession to the male line, was invalid.

If France were to be spared further agony, and if Henry of Navarre were ever to possess a kingdom commensurate with his exalted title, it was evident that he must renounce his Protestant faith and turn Catholic. Such a solution had been voiced as early as 1589, but it took the king four years to realize he had no other choice. On July 25, 1593, dressed in white and escorted by the highest dignitaries of the realm, Henry made formal recantation at the abbey church of St. Denis. A minority remained unconvinced and regarded his conversion as "supping with the devil," but most Catholics jumped at the chance to end more than thirty years of chronic warfare and return to their pigs and crops, their warehouses and ledgers, and to the serious business of civilized existence. Paris voluntarily opened its gates on the morning of March 22, 1594, and when Henry rode through the streets, the crowds, which would have torn him from limb to limb a year earlier, greeted the king joyously.

Like his royal cousin in England, Henry preferred mercy to revenge and realized that diplomacy was a surer weapon than war. He won the regional governors and the noble magnates of France with fat gifts and lucrative titles, and when his Council complained about the price, he explained that "the things they are delivering up to us would cost us ten times as much if we had to take them by force. Even for the Duke of Mayenne he demanded no punishment. The duke was made governor of the Ile de France, and his many debts were assumed by the crown. Henry was content to walk his obese and rheumatic old adversary, for whom every step was a torment, at a brisk pace through the gardens of the royal chateau of Montceaux during the heat of the day, and the king happily whispered to a friend: "If I lead this fat lump a long enough dance I shall have my revenge."

Catholics could be won to peace by honors and silver. Protestants, however, proved to be more difficult, and Henry was forced to give up a portion of his sovereignty and to recognize the legal existence of a Calvinist state within a Catholic kingdom. By the Edict of Nantes, in 1598, Huguenots were allowed to practice their faith in all towns except Paris and the episcopal cities. They were made eligible for all government offices; a special law court was established to handle cases involving their faith and their persons; and for a period of eight years they were given control of 200 towns where they were permitted to maintain armed garrisons, supported partly by the king. The practice of religious toleration in a century that absolutely denied the principle was established by a monarch who had deemed Paris to be worth a Mass. When conservative lawyers tried to block the promulgation of the edict by arguing that it violated the historic laws of France and the Holy Church, Henry assured them that they stood in far greater danger of being declared heretics for not obeying him than for sanctioning an act that might be displeasing to God.

As Henry himself said, he worked hard for France, checking the resurgence of feudal anarchy, cooling the heat of religious ardor, profiting from the discrediting of old ideas and institutions, which seemed capable only of producing further war and disunity, and rebuilding a land that was potentially the richest and most powerful in Europe. By 1600, the essential condition that had made Spanish hegemony possible and had been the major consideration of Elizabethan foreign policy had disappeared: France was no longer a weak and divided realm to be sacrificed at the bidding of another state. It was once again the senior kingdom of the Continent, and before the century was out, England would again view France, not Spain, as the enemy.

At home, too, life was passing the old queen by. For a few brief decades Renaissance egotism, religious zeal, the acquisitive spirit, the thirst for adventure, and even lingering medieval chivalric posing and love of display had been harnessed and put to work by the Tudor state. The result had been a perfectly balanced yet wonderfully buoyant and sensitive society. Elizabethans wrote with the boisterous grace of a Shakespeare; they were glad to be alive, yet profoundly aware of their own mortality and just a little afraid of the life to come. Even the Puritans, although they

continued to warn of God's punishment upon the wicked, enjoyed the world in which they lived; if they hadn't, they would not have been so anxious to improve it. But as the years passed, the static and ordered society grew rigid and unwieldy, and Renaissance confidence and vitality slipped into self-satisfaction or rebelliousness. By 1600, landed country gentlemen, Puritan zealots, and city merchants were growing restive under a divinely sanctioned and paternalistic regime.

After Elizabeth died, and the irritating element of the Stuart personality was added to a dangerously unstable political, religious, and economic situation, elderly Elizabethans looked back with nostalgia to a golden age and remembered far more than had, in fact, existed. "During her life, what peace in her country! What plenty in her land! What triumphs in her court! What learning in her schools! What trades in her cities! What wealth in her kingdom! What wisdom in her counsel, and what grace in her government!" Actually the final decade of Good Queen Bess's reign saw neither plenty in her land nor grace in her government. Between 1594 and 1597, the harvests failed every year and the poor starved. In the popular mind, hoarders and usurers, those medieval caterpillars of the commonwealth, were to blame, and Elizabeth's government was severely criticized for doing little about them. As the price of food soared, the buying power of wages dropped to an all-time low, and Oxfordshire peasants took up arms against the queen's sheriffs and justices.

A paternalistic government was not completely devoid of ideas on how to handle the economic crisis, and the most revolutionary of all Elizabethan poor laws was enacted in 1601 - a law that for the first time recognized that poverty was a social, not a spiritual or individual ill. Humane as Elizabeth's economic views were, her policy remained essentially medieval and anachronistic in an age that was casting off its feudal and religious approach to economics. The Tudor state believed in curtailing cutthroat competition, fixing wages and prices, and licensing all production under grants of monopoly to achieve a stable and contented society and a fair living for all. Unfortunately, medieval guild economics applied to the entire kingdom did little to curb the recession, and they antagonized the most vocal and wealthy elements of the society. If peasants and apprentices censured the crown for failing to keep wages and prices in reasonable accord, and for its inability to appease a wrathful god who

had brought unseasonable rains for three summers in a row, landlords and merchants were irritated by a paternalistic state that strangled free enterprise, failed to recognize the dynamism of an expanding commercial and industrial economy, and raised the cost of living by issuing monopolies to favored courtiers in order to finance their lavish and uneconomic ways.

Tudor England was changing. A few great peers might continue to maintain households of 200 to 300 retainers, but iron smelters employed as many as 4,000 workers. During Elizabeth's reign, coal production increased by 700 percent, and iron production was up fivefold. By 1600, it was noted that a London merchant might be worth 100,000 pounds, as much as the greatest peer in the realm. Slowly but surely Englishmen began to perceive that the search for the black coal of Yorkshire was more rewarding than the quest for silver, and that the mining of iron might be more profitable than digging for gold.

The wealth, prosperity, and domestic peace with which Elizabeth had blessed her people produced within the landowning and commercial groups a new sense of their own social and political importance. In 1500, Erasmus had described the prince's threat as an eagle's scream before which all men and interests gave way; by 1600, a new note was heard, the idea of service to the state as a public and landed obligation and not as a duty to the sovereign. Elizabeth's loyal Commons were evolving a new and revolutionary conceit, viewing themselves as legislators, not as humble petitioners, and demanding a share in the government of the realm. Members of the lower house, though they hesitated as yet to answer the question, had heard and recorded Essex's fateful outburst: "What! Cannot princes err?"

To merchants anxious to search out new avenues of trade, to country gentlemen groaning under a decade of wartime taxation, to entrepreneurs with clever schemes to improve production and reap a quick profit, and to a realm that was suffering from the long trade depression of the 1590s, government monopolies regulating and licensing almost every item of life from buttons to tobacco seemed to be an immoral and unwarranted interference in the rights and economic activities of the individual. It was over the abuse of such

monopolies that the most serious and concerted attack on the structure and theory of Tudor government broke in 1601 with a fury that alarmed Elizabeth almost as much as had the Essex rebellion. Three vital issues were at stake: the royal prerogative that stood above earthly criticism, the right of the crown to interfere in the actions of subjects in order to ensure the welfare of all, and finally the role of Commons as humble adviser to the crown, not as arrogant initiator of policy. During the controversy over monopolies, Commons listened in hostile silence to the efforts of privy councilors to explain the royal prerogative and the crown's right to license and control trade and production. When one of the Council suggested that in theory all men's estates belonged to the sovereign, he was shouted down by landowners who had long since forgotten their feudal obligations and viewed their lordships and manors as private property. Worse yet, when at the close of the first session the queen passed through the Parliament chamber, the traditional cry, "God bless Your Majesty," was weak and half-hearted. Gloriana was thoroughly alarmed, for the mortar of her entire governmental edifice - the indispensable personal popularity that she treasured above her constitutional prerogative - was turning to dust.

Elizabeth had fought long and hard to conserve her subjects' resources and to win victory in the war against Spain with the least loss of English blood and the least expenditure of English money, but the war had been long, the cost heavy, and her kingdom belabored by famine and war weariness. She had sacrificed to the war effort almost her entire inheritance from her father's confiscation of the monastic lands, and as her capital dwindled, her income declined, and her dependence upon parliamentary subsidies mounted. Gentry and merchants, who more and more often paid the royal piper, sought to call the governmental tune. As yet they demanded only the redress of evils and the reform of monopolies, but in so doing they implicitly championed the doctrine of economic liberalism, and by seizing the initiative and forcing their views on the crown, they raised economic and constitutional problems that were insoluble within the structure of the Tudor state.

Elizabeth's sense of political survival was matchless. She realized that should Commons present its demands in statute form, a dangerous precedent might be established for a

further assumption of the legislative initiative by Parliament. Consequently, she promised immediate and complete redress of wrongs and the revamping of the entire system of monopolies. By surrendering and admitting the existence of abuse, she saved her royal prerogative from being made the subject of a constitutional debate. As always, Gloriana was willing to stoop to save what she held most high - her reputation and the unity of her kingdom. In her Golden Speech to Parliament in November 1601, she told her loyal Commons: "I was never so much enticed with the glorious name of a king or royal authority of a queen, as delighted that God hath made me His instrument to maintain His truth and glory and to defend His kingdom from peril, dishonor, tyranny, and oppression." With unerring political sense, Elizabeth knew when to present her divinity dressed in the guise of utilitarianism.

At the conclusion of her address, Gloriana bid each of the gentlemen present approach and kiss her hand. It was the final farewell; sixteen months later, the queen was dead. She died, as she had ruled, when her "own great judgment advised"; Elizabeth elected death when she realized that she had no further reason to live. Throughout the winter of 1602, she had been suffering from bouts of melancholia and had aged visibly. She seemed to have little concern for her health, almost inviting pneumonia by wearing summer clothes. For days on end, she sat looking into a past that no one at court could share. She must have known that Cecil, Raleigh, and the rest were more mindful of what they were soon to get than of what they were shortly to lose; and the queen allowed Cecil to rehearse her Scottish heir and to arrange the details of the succession behind her back. She saw but said nothing, except to sigh that "her authority among the people was sensibly decayed."

In early March, a "heavy dullness" seized her, whereby she could neither sleep nor eat, and she sat waiting to leave an England to which she had nothing more to give and in which she no longer took interest. Years before, she had said that she had no desire to live if her life and reign were no longer of profit to her subjects. In March 1603, Elizabeth knew that moment had arrived, and the time for a new master had come. She died with quiet dignity, slipping from disinterest into speechlessness, coma, and death. On March 24, 1603, she turned her head to the wall and her eyes to God.

The magnitude of Elizabeth Tudor's success is baffling; historians may record it, but they can scarcely explain it. With failure, the dark necessity of circumstances and personality stand out, and the chain of events leading to despair, death, and perdition can be traced back to the first false step. But success is too mercurial, too volatile, to be disciplined by causality. It seems to possess no roots, no history; it merely exists, blooms, and dies. What, after all, is success? Is it really what it appears to be, or is it a trick of historical hindsight? Elizabeth was successful in doing what? In bequeathing to her Stuart heir problems of state beyond his, or possibly any king's, ability to solve? In holding time at bay and allowing a later generation to pay the price? In avoiding, through feminine guile, her subjects' mounting pressure to have done with benevolent paternalism and "degree, priority, and place?" Elizabeth was a success, but might not another sovereign have been more successful? What wonders might have taken place had she acted with the resolution of Henry VIII? What might she have achieved? The answer, most likely, is nothing; her reign might have ended in catastrophic failure. And there's the rub. Gloriana rarely did what people most admire, yet she is judged preeminently successful. She contrived to elevate inconsistency to a virtue, turn vacillation into wisdom, and translate half measures into policy.

The secret of Elizabeth's art was that she was blessed with ambitions commensurate to her abilities. She demanded no windows into people's souls; she neither coveted her neighbor's lands nor sought to carve out an empire. She was content to preserve the unity of her kingdom and earn the devotion of her subjects. In the months before she died, the queen had occasion to speak of her life's achievement, and she told her loving and loyal people that "though you have had, and may have, many mightier and wiser princes sitting in this seat, yet you never had, nor shall have, any that will love you better." Alone among her royal contemporaries, she possessed the skill and means to achieve her end. Philip of Spain consumed himself and martyred his kingdom in demanding that all men and women subscribe to the absolute truth. No matter how estimable his vision, it was doomed to failure, for not all the gold of the mythical El Dorado, let alone the resources of the Spanish empire, could have transformed such a dream into reality. Catherine de Médicis' purpose was simple and domestic - palaces and scepters for herself and all

her brood - but historic circumstance and the shallowness of her own mind made a mockery of even such modest ambitions. The same was true of Mary of Scotland and of Essex; their hot desires took no account of reality. Only Elizabeth succeeded. She was no modern woman, but at least she was an adult and a realist, free of obsessions. “She only is a king. She only knows how to rule!” was Henry of Navarre’s tribute.

Gloriana achieved her life’s ambition: “To do some act that would make her fame spread abroad in her lifetime, and, after, occasion memorial forever.” In this, she was supremely successful, for the century that produced Shakespeare, Donne, Drake, and Bacon bears her name - the age of Elizabeth.

Even such is time which takes in trust

Our youth, our joys, our all we have,

And pays us but with age and dust;

Who in the dark and silent grave,

When we have wandered all our ways,

Shuts up the story of our days.

But from this earth, this grave, this dust

The Lord shall raise me up, I trust.

The words are Raleigh’s, but the conceit belongs to Elizabeth and to the golden heroes of her age.

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Published by New Word City LLC, 2015
www.NewWordCity.com

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ISBN 978-1-61230-889-0